

**"But,
That's Not
What I Called
About"**

Hilly Rose



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For Mary Shepper Rose, who is so much like me her ideas have been easily incorporated into this book, yet so different her editorial skills have brought order out of my chaos. I am triply blessed that she shares her life with me as wife, helpmate, and lover.

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The Communicasters Hit Parade

Each of the telephone-talk show hosts interviewed was asked to select the best and worst guest ever to appear on their programs. At the top of the list are those people who received numerous nominations to this compendium.

Best

Carlton Fredericks
 (Nutritionist)
Muhammad Ali
Jane Fonda
Moshe Dayan
Orson Welles
Sidney Poitier
Lyndon Baines Johnson
Lowell Thomas
Robert Kennedy
Jimmy Carter
Shirley MacLaine
Al Jolson
J. Edgar Hoover
Art Buchwald
Robert Merrill
Charles Colson

Worst

Music Personalities
 Who Are Stoned
Eliot Janeway
Marlo Thomas
Vance Packard
Helen Gurley Brown
David Duke (KKK)
Gunnar Myrdahl
Fabian
Bob Considine
Cecil Beaton
Jeane Dixon
Shirley MacLaine



1

Marconi Never Told Me There'd Be Days Like This

Many mothers in America still exhort their daughters to marry doctors, lawyers, and even accountants. There have never been many mothers urging wedded bliss with a radio telephone-talk show host. Who would want their daughter to spend the rest of her life with a man trained to get the last word? It's against nature!

Talk show hosts know everything there is to know about "everything there is to know." They are opinionated boors who delight in putting their verbal opponents on the defensive, hoping to make them look like idiots. Failing all this, they will cut off a conversation with epithets like, "Don't annoy me with your delusions of adequacy."

In plain English, it is socially unacceptable to be a telephone-talk show host. He is a prime target for the hatreds and frustrations of society. He is loved to distraction by some; hated by many more. He is expected to have an opinion on everything, but any opinion had better be verified with every obscure fact known to man.

Because he is generally controversial, sponsors and radio station managers hate him unless he produces top-flight

ratings. On the average, he earns much less than a rank amateur disc jockey, who never gets beyond such introductions as, "Here's a golden oldie from the year 1965!"

No wonder our number is small. Some have committed suicide, while others repose in institutions for the insane. We are the pariah of our times. Yet we think the job we do is one of the most vital in holding our nation together through the most difficult years in modern history.

When America was a pup, the good people came together in town hall meetings to vent their spleens against their neighbors and to propose action. Sometimes they got action (like being hanged for their opinions or being run out of town); at the very least, they felt better for being able to express how they felt. The "little man" could do verbal battle with the town big wigs, and the big wigs could then do whatever they originally intended and truthfully say all sides had been heard.

Not much has changed over the intervening years. The introduction of radio into American homes kept the good citizens occupied within their own walls, and the town meetings saw their attendance fall off precipitously. After all, one could hear those same town leaders pontificating over the radio without needing to dress up, without going out into inclement weather, and without developing a sore tail from those hard card chairs. True, you couldn't answer back—but you could change the station to "Amos 'n Andy."

Sometime after World War II, as television found its way into American homes, radio began a struggle for survival by playing lots of music. But a few innovative souls thought there might be some lonely people out there yearning for the sound of the human voice, perhaps even a conversation between two people. Easterners were treated to Dorothy and Dick (Dorothy Kilgallen and her husband Richard Kollmar) during breakfast. Others heard late nighters Jack Eigen or Barry Gray coming from nightclubs. At the Chez Paree in

Chicago, Mike Wallace and his wife at that time, Buff Cobb, talked to each other, star guests, and phone callers, whose conversations were repeated on the air by the hosts.

But this was all prelude to the thrust of today's telephone-talk shows that move legislation, provide in-depth news coverage and analysis, and fully satisfy the public affairs requirement of an FCC license. Some talk shows just entertain, while others simply try to ameliorate the lonely hours.

- Ray Briem, Los Angeles, helped get the sailors on the *Pueblo* home from North Korea.

- Jerry Williams, Boston, led the fight against the huge 1977 Congressional pay raise.

- Howard Miller, Chicago, worked hard for the proper recognition of Chicago policemen.

- Alan Courtney, Miami, spent years attempting to do away with the earnings limitation on Social Security.

- Ed Busch, Dallas, helped get the vaults at Ft. Knox opened for inspection for the first time in 40 years.

- Long John Nebel, New York City, popularized UFOs and extraterrestrials long before the recent rash of movies raised public consciousness.

- Herb Jepko from Salt Lake City provides small talk and companionship across the nation.

But like many of my talk show brothers, tea and sympathy has never been my bag. Action is! Because of my talk shows:

- I stopped the State of California from allowing the drilling of 200 oil wells in San Francisco Bay.

- I am probably responsible for the ordination of more ministers than Oral Roberts, Billy Graham, and the Catholic Church combined.

- My radio studio was once surrounded by the FBI, local police, and the military police, with thousands of phone calls flooding authorities demanding an immediate arrest.

- Believing in my own omnipotence, I even got the city

authorities to remove a dead horse from a lady's front yard at midnight.

Political causes excite me and my audience to action. In one year we helped stop California lawmakers from paying themselves big bonuses; we helped rescind a state law requiring installation of a relatively useless smog control device; we stopped Los Angeles from fluoridating its water even though the city fathers had voted it into law; and we applied pressure to get a bill, which forces judges to send a criminal to prison for committing a major crime with a gun, out of a legislative committee and enacted into law.

Radio listeners trust a good talk show host. He reads much more than most people have time to read, and he has access to first-hand sources that many prime-time news shows ignore due to time limitations. He talks to senators, congressmen, movie stars, underground activists, and the main movers and shakers of the world. The listeners see him as their personal representative and allow themselves to live vicariously through his experiences. They see him doing and saying what they would like to do and say if they had the power or resources.

Let me share a quite typical phone call with you:

"Everyone knows President Carter is being manipulated behind the scenes by the Rockefellers."

"Everyone?" I challenge.

"Absolutely everyone I talk to."

"How many people do you even know?"

"At least two hundred."

"And you've asked every one of them?"

"Easily half of them."

"Then you have talked to a hundred people, probably of your own peer group. How many blacks, Chicanos, rich people, Easterners, etc. have you talked to? Out of 217-million Americans, you talked to only a hundred. Yet you have the audacity to challenge the accuracy of national polls

who choose people scientifically according to categories, and tell me they are wrong because their responses come out differently than your own."

This conversation typifies the misconception that is one of the root causes of dissension and frustration in our society. Most of us assume that because all of the people we know agree, that's the way the country feels. 'Tain't so. As a talk show host, I fight almost daily to overcome this very human weakness.

I force myself to drive through low-income neighborhoods and to look carefully at the people and what they are doing and saying. I want to try to see the world through their eyes. The food at the truck stop isn't always good, but the chit-chat is eye-opening (and so is the coffee). Since talk show listeners come from all walks of life, I don't want to ignore those conversations nor would I ignore the conversation at Chasen's or Emilio's in Hollywood.

This ability to present what "other" people are really thinking sets radio telephone-talk shows apart from any other form of communication in our modern-day society. Radio talk shows are often referred to as "two-way radio." In reality, they are "multi-way radio" because they provide a true diversity of opinion. Thus, with modern refinements, they are not unlike the old town hall meetings.

Some of those refinements are a little easier to live with than in yesteryear when heretics were tarred and feathered. My comeuppance usually arrives with the postman, who daily sheds 150 to 200 letters of praise or fury. Some include death threats, while others say simply, "We are watching your wife and children." But one learns to treat the fury as an occupational hazard. However, it is a bit unsettling when, from time to time, someone actually shows up with gun in hand to argue a point more forcefully than he could via the telephone.

But my greatest regret is not being able to taste one morsel

of the homemade cookies and cakes baked by the many lovely ladies as a sign of affection. I will never forget an incident at a neighboring station when someone sent a case of Coca-Cola to the news crew. It was laced with LSD!

Over the years I have been privileged to know countless celebrities from the entertainment, political, and business worlds. I have even had some spooky guests from the world beyond—psychic visitations with no rational, logical explanation. I wouldn't trade the variety, range of knowledge, or the power of being a radio telephone-talk host for any job in the world. To the thousands who urge me to run for public office, I can only say that I refuse to narrow my horizons. Perhaps the presidency of the United States offers more rewards, but I don't think it can be as exciting as what follows.

2

The Wacky World of Talk Radio

The weird, the wonderful, and the unexpected all make up the wacky world of talk radio. Every day brings its share of craziness for the audience as well as the host. And on those days when there's a full moon, watch out!

A few years ago at KFI we were looking for some kind of unusual contest that could utilize our 200 seat theater. Since I am a mail-order minister in the Universal Life Church, I am empowered to marry people. These two facts came together as divine inspiration. We decided to offer a free wedding in our theater and to broadcast it. We would offer lots of prizes, including a honeymoon in Las Vegas, and we would even print the wedding invitations. Since the wedding was to be held in June, we knew we would be inundated with contestants. All the winning couple had to do was write a letter telling why they wanted Hilly Rose to marry them.

A winning letter was finally chosen based on neatness, aptitude, and all those rules that contests are made of. The young lady in question was elated, but when I asked her to bring her fiancé to meet me she hesitated. Somehow my newsman's instincts and personal convictions about marriage

were alerted. I didn't want anything to go wrong and I also did not want to be a party to marrying people frivolously. I wanted to be sure they understood that this marriage was binding, so I arranged for them to visit me before the big event.

Not being an old hand at prenuptial counseling, I wasn't aware of how nervous the groom was. I just thought he was a little less than solid. I told the couple of the seriousness of marriage and all the responsibilities it entailed. What the heck, I'd seen this scene many times in the movies. I felt my performance was magnificent. Apparently it was. I did such a good job that on the day of the wedding the wailing bride-to-be called—the groom had skipped town after leaving a note stating that he couldn't go through with it. No one knew where he had gone or when he would be back. (I found out later that he had faltered at the altar before, so it really wasn't all my fault.) There I was, stuck with a bride, 200 invited guests, all the gifts and prizes, and a highly publicized broadcast to be done!

The guests were notified not to come and I managed to do the broadcast as a regular open line show—asking ladies to tell us how they lost their man at the altar or kept him from slipping away.

The happy ending? Well that came two weeks later when the groom returned and the couple slipped off to Las Vegas on their own and tied the marriage knot privately. Ministering is obviously not my line of work.

At the other end of my saintliness is the devil that made me do it. If Orson Welles could cause hysteria with his famous "War of the Worlds" broadcast, why couldn't I go with the trend and have a nude encounter on radio? It would be a first, and it seemed like a fine idea at the time. Radio is nothing more than theater of the mind, after all, and no one really had to take their clothes off.

It was during a period when the station was experimenting

with Saturday night formats. We wanted to get away from doing heavy political shows and we were looking for something that might be fun. To insure that everyone listening knew we were only kidding, we invited a female comedy team and well-known Hollywood comedy writer, Stanley Ralph Ross, to sit in as encounter members. The entire program was conceived as a spoof on what was then the big movement toward nude encounters. We even insisted that phone callers to the program could participate only if they too were nude.

The panelists began on a serious note, discussing the nudity movement and why people wear clothes in the first place. Some participants felt freer to converse without wearing clothes, because clothes were symbols that inhibited them. Bank presidents dressed differently from skid-row winos. Without clothes, everyone related on an equal level without regard to one's position in life. Then one of the lady comics said she was taking off her bra because she had read an article that said bras could cause breast cancer due to their restrictive bindings. It was all downhill from there as the members of the panel described what clothes they were removing and why.

The on-air phone calls were almost all in favor of this new form of unrestricted and unbinding radio. Only 10% of the callers were even mildly disapproving. The worst call was from a lady who listened to the entire two-hour program and humphed that she had better things to do with her time, like go to church. Of course, she had listened to almost the entire program before she called.

I kept asking the callers whether they were playing by the rules and were speaking strictly in the nude, because we couldn't trust anyone who didn't reveal all (sort of a play on "you can't trust anyone over 30"). We were assured by all callers that they were playing by the rules, no matter how chilly they might get. Those of us doing the program thought

it was so silly it never even crossed our minds that anyone would take it seriously. WRONG!

The station's main switchboard received over 700 protest calls and the mailbags were full of angry letters. How could we actually have sat in a radio studio with our clothes off? Even the Citizens for Decency sent a letter of protest. The *Hollywood Reporter* got the story and ran it on the front page. I was in a state of shock. How could anything conceived purely as theater of the mind, all in the spirit of fun, cause such a controversy?

The station manager urged me to restrain myself in the future. I was to report the bare facts, not participate in them. To this day, no one but the people in that small radio studio know for sure whether anyone removed any clothing. It was all word pictures—showing once again the tremendous impact of radio.

Larry Glick at WBZ in prudish Boston had a somewhat similar reaction from his listeners when he interviewed a San Francisco topless waitress. She was dressed in a topcoat, which precluded knowing whether she had anything else on her body. Glick, being a red-blooded American boy, made a number of comments to the effect that he felt certain she was nude underneath the coat. With no warning the precinct police arrived responding to a number of complaints by callers about a nude woman broadcasting at WBZ. When they saw the "nude" woman was wearing a topcoat, they retreated but kept their radio tuned in.

Almost everyone knows there is a tape delay on phone-in shows to protect us from broadcasting libel or obscenities on the air. Many funny things happen as a result. Sally Jessy Raphael of WMCA in New York once had a call Christmas morning from a lady who asked what a nice Catholic girl like Sally was doing on the air when she should be at Mass. Quick-witted Sally retorted, "I am at Mass, this program is on tape." The caller breathed a sigh of relief and said,

"Thank goodness, I was afraid you were on live!"

When Bill Ballance in Los Angeles first used tape delay, a lady called in to complain about her husband. She went on and on and finally said, "I told my husband I don't have to take all this bullshit." Bill quickly pressed the delay button. Listeners heard six seconds of dead silence and then the extremely clear word, "Bullshit." Bill had just not pressed the button long enough.

Gangster Mickey Cohen was the organized crime kingpin in the Los Angeles area for many years. Shortly before he died, he wrote the story of his life. Feeling my audience in Los Angeles would be particularly interested, I booked him without ever having met him.

He had recently undergone major surgery and had to be brought into the studio in a wheelchair. Knowing he was near death, he had nothing to lose and was willing to name names and tell the truth about everything except organized crime operations. I found him to be an amiable person, but he had one little flaw: his normal flow of language had more expletives deleted than the worst of Richard Nixon's tapes. Before the program started, we agreed that I would raise my hand as a signal to hold back his obscenities. That succeeded only in confusing him and halted the flow of his warm, fascinating tales. This was one time that tape delay saved the day. Working closely with my engineer, we told Cohen to forget he was on the air and we'd take care of it. He then opened up with a great interview, complete with obscenities that we edited live on the air. Mickey told his book publicist it was the best interview he had ever done. We received letters of praise about the interview, but many people wanted us to send them a list of the deleted words. That probably would have been a better seller than Cohen's book.

Jerry Williams tells about the time he was working at WBBM in Chicago. It was shortly after the school racial integration incident at Little Rock, Arkansas, and his guest

was Daisy Mae Bates of the Little Rock NAACP. After she had left the studio, one irate caller called Bates a "no good nigger and a whore." Jerry blanched, not only because it was a racial attack but because it was a personal attack. He kept his finger on the button a good long time, only this time to see the engineer blanch. The tape delay equipment had electronically failed and the comment went out over the air. Jerry's program was widely heard, yet not one complaint was received. That says something either about the attitude in Chicago during this period, or about the excellent job Jerry did apologizing for the remark getting on the air.

Ron McCoy at KFI in Los Angeles answered a call from a young woman who wanted to talk about half-American Indians. Ron flippantly asked, "Which half?" She responded, "Up yours!" Ron was so astounded, the tape delay had rolled by before he had the presence to hit the button.

Paul Benzaquin at WBZ in Boston was interviewing the author of a play who used the word "horseshit." He hit the button but the delay loop was faulty, and what came out over the airwaves was only the repetition "horseshit, horseshit, horseshit, horseshit. . . ." Paul was suspended for a week.

My favorite tape delay story concerns an in-studio guest. Before this incident I never concerned myself about what a studio guest might say. Generally people to be interviewed are responsible members of the community and many times they are authors who have been carefully schooled. (Have you noticed how many times they answer a question with, "Well, as I say in my book, *Thunder Over Omaha* . . ." or whatever?) This particular author used to be employed by a well-known banking institution. He had written a book exposing how banks rip off their customers.

I don't claim to be Milton Friedman, but I do know quite a bit about economics and took a strong position in opposition to the views expressed by the guest. I kept throwing fact

after fact at him as he wallowed in unverified theory. As it turned out, this was his first interview. No one had ever challenged his ideas before, and he was lost. After about 15 minutes, he was backed into a corner with nowhere to go ideologically. Suddenly he blurted out, "You and your fucking facts!" I reached wildly for the delay button and pressed it hard. The engineer just grinned and threw up his hands. We were not on delay. What had been said to me had been heard by all the listeners. The author was summarily ejected from the studio and we instituted the tape delay, even for the in-studio guests.

Once I had as guests a husband and wife team who had practiced as marriage counselors for years. Now they had written a book on how married folks should get along with each other. Unfortunately they were both highly nervous about being on the air for the first time. At the beginning their answers were almost monosyllabic. The wife warmed up a bit and finally her husband began to forget there was a microphone in front of him. Nearing the end of the program, the two began to contradict each other about various points under discussion. Finally he began screaming at her and she responded in kind as I was signing off the show.

Frequently I will take an opposing point of view to that of the caller, just for the purposes of discussion. I used to say, "Let me be the devil's advocate here," and then go on. I stopped saying that after a group of church-going and well-meaning ladies called on a savings and loan company that was one of my sponsors. They all threatened to withdraw their savings if the company continued to sponsor a man who *advocates the devil*.

Speaking of the devil, one night my invited guests were experts on the Devil's Triangle (i.e., the Bermuda Triangle) in the Caribbean. They went on at some length documenting all the airplanes and ships that had been lost without a trace. I was so fascinated that I hated to interrupt for a live

commercial, but slipped it in without thinking. It was for a wonderful cruise in the Caribbean, the very area covered by the Devil's Triangle. The guests began to guffaw and when I realized what I was doing, I just threw the copy up in the air and cracked up, too. By the way, the sponsor mysteriously disappeared and hasn't been found since.

Another side of this devilish discourse occurred to Jim Dunbar in San Francisco. At Christmastime he invited poor children from various churches to come down to KGO to be interviewed on the street while he distributed Christmas baskets of fruits and nuts. A weird-looking man stood in the crowd and pressed a note into Jim's hand that said, "I have returned. Would like to talk to your listeners. Jesus C. Satan." When Jim returned to the studio to continue the program, he asked his listeners whether he should put "Jesus" on the program. By far, the callers agreed he had no place on Jim's show.

Because San Francisco has its full share of weirdos, Owen Spann thought a caller was pulling his leg when, in the fall of 1977, he called to say there were giant cobwebs in the sky filled with millions of spiders. Owen suggested they send someone out with a giant cobweb to pick up the caller. As the morning went on, more and more callers insisted they had seen these huge webs and they all sounded like rational people. Owen checked with the police department and, indeed, there were massive webs, 20 feet long and two to three feet wide. A scientist said they were made by a family of spiders, called Linyphiidae, who spin the long threads and waft them in the wind to travel long distances.

Assured he wasn't being put on by a group of loonies, Owen decided to have some fun with it. He asked the callers to use their imagination to find a use for this carpet of cobwebs floating all over the city. The suggestions included decoration for a Christmas tree, breakfast cereal topping, and, the favorite suggestion, allowing the webs to eat the Transamerica Pyramid Building.

Dave Baum, known in Chicago and St. Louis markets, takes his professionalism seriously and recalls a time that he did not feel well and contracted a desperate case of the runs while on the air. Since there were no provisions to play music on the program and there were 12 minutes to go, Baum put on a couple of commercials and called for help from the newsman on duty. He instructed the newsman to pretend he was Baum and just say, "Uh hmmm" at appropriate pauses in the caller's conversation. Dave put a caller on the air, got the conversation going, and then sprinted from the men's room. Meanwhile, the newsman opened the microphone and, wherever necessary, simply said, "Uh hmmm. Uh hmmm." A few minutes later Dave returned to the studio, picked up the cadence of "Uh hmms" and none of the listeners even knew he was gone.

Mail is very important to a program that deals with people. Some great investigative tips come in the mail; some people want an address they think they heard; others simply want a pen pal; high school and college students want help with their term papers.

We receive between 100 and 200 letters daily and they come from 26 states, Canada, and Mexico. While I would be upset if that fell off, it is a burden because someone has to read the letters and, in some cases, respond to them. It would be nice to say that talk show hosts have staffs to handle their mail, but that is just not the case. I would hate to turn these letters over to an unsympathetic secretary, but there is no way I could read them all myself without failing at my main job of staying abreast of the news and planning the program. My solution is to have my partner, my wife Mary, who produces the program, handle the mail. She knows me best, and, since we are both Libras, generally responds as I would. The most important mail gets my immediate attention. I have noticed however that since Mary handles the mail, I no longer receive any letters from girls

under 25, and certainly none of those fabled nude photos I hear other radio personalities receive.

This is a small price to pay however for being relieved of the herculean job of reading through pages and pages of handwritten or single-spaced missives that run 20 pages or more long. Some outline all the solutions to the world's problems, some describe the writer's ailments in detail, while others are a declaration of their love; more letters seek legal advice, investment counseling, or help in selling property and automobiles; even more contain offers of mustache cups and plant cuttings; some seek information about the value of antiques and patchwork quilts, where to go on vacation, or how to get into radio. Some simply ask if I'm free for coffee some afternoon to just kick it around. My wife tells me I've even had offers for blind dates and other more intimate offers that *she* claims I wouldn't be interested in. Some folks offer me their vacation homes (to share with them while they are there) and send me maps in case I ever get up that way.

It is fascinating reading and many very bright people spend hours detailing and philosophizing their points of view. I truly wish there were enough hours in the day to spend with the mail, but it is impossible with air deadlines to meet. I do, however, thank everyone who has ever written to me. It is an honor that they choose to share their innermost thoughts with me.

I am particularly fond of the 15-year-old in Phoenix, Arizona, who wrote, "I was so mad that I turned my dial to another station, and it will stay there for as long as you keep talking like a fool." I often wonder if this youngster has found out that I have changed my ways and that he can start listening again.

A man in Nebraska wrote, "Some time ago I listened to your program when Melvin was your guest. I wonder if you could give me his address?" Melvin who? When was he a guest? What did he talk about? Offhand I can think of 20

people named Melvin who have been on the program "some time ago."

There is a lady in Tempe, Arizona, who wrote that she can't call me during the show because the phone is in her husband's new bedroom. It seems he moved down the hall because my program kept him awake at night.

One letter really shook me up. It read: "Dear Hilly, I, along with my two friends, listen to you at work. We really enjoy hearing you. Speaking for myself, I've learned more about the world we live in in the last few months, from local politics to world economics, than I ever have before. We would appreciate it if you would send us an autographed photo of yourself. Could you sign it to the FBI night crew?" The address supplied was indeed the local FBI office. I checked with my own contact at the FBI to see if this was on the level and it turned out to be legitimate. Though the photo was sent, I have often wondered if some practical joker will reproduce it on the FBI's Ten Most Wanted List or whether the boys on the night crew use it for target practice.

A man in Nevada wrote that his stepson used the phrase, "the reason is because" He suggested to his stepson that this was murdering the English language and the boy replied it was okay since Hilly Rose uses it often. The man went on to write, "Surely a man who has chosen broadcasting as a career can spare a few minutes a day in pursuit of acceptable grammar." Alls I can say is, I don't remember sayin' nuthing like that there.

Particularly annoying was a letter from a postal worker who detailed all the waste in the postal system. She mailed it in a postage-free government envelope.

Not all letters are favorable. Ron McCoy had the talk show immediately following mine on the air. We sometimes had fun by pretending there was a feud between us. I received a photocopy of a letter sent to Ron that read in

part, "I fully agree with you about the disagreement you had with Hilly Rose over the incident some time ago. [Unknown to Ron or me.] Hilly stinks, he is a disgusting broadcaster. He threw sarcastic remarks about you each evening he began his radio show. He is a yellow dog. He is supposed to be your friend. I don't know from which garbage lot you picked him up." And the letter got more vituperative from there. It was unsigned as are 99% of the hate letters we get.

More frequently than one would imagine, we get letters exactly like this: "I have been listening to your program off and on since last February. I believe that such a program is necessary for several reasons, which I will not elongate [sic] on. I would be happy and request an appearance on your program to discuss any area of national policy or local problems on the open forum." The letter was from Riverside, California, and addressed to "Telly" Rose. I had the urge to forward it to "Hilly" Savalas.

There are many people who hear only what they want to hear and there are many more who hear only half of what is said. Worst of all are the irate citizens who decide it is time I learned a lesson and report me to the management of my station, the FCC, or responsible members of government. However, I am well schooled in what is legal and have never had any real problem.

An example of this occurred after a program we did during the Ford-Carter campaign. We received a letter from Los Angeles City Councilman Arthur Snyder who represents a large portion of the Chicano community. His letter read: "It has been brought to my attention that approximately two months ago you had a talk show relative to the defamation of Mexican Americans. Representatives from the Chicano Coalition attended the talk show. During the program one of the representatives tried to speak out but was unable to voice an opinion. It would be appreciated if you would send a copy of your commentary for that day"

The allegations by one of Councilman Snyder's constituents were so riddled with error, it was beyond belief. We had only one guest from the Chicano Coalition who happened to be the chairman. He and I talked for a half hour about his organization's stand that neither candidate was sensitive to the needs of the Chicano community. It is my usual pattern to do this in order to bring out all points the guest wishes to make, uninterrupted. The chairman did a fine job and as usual I challenged some of his main points. Then the phones were opened to the callers. As always, we tried to balance pro and con callers, but we can only work within the framework of the calls on the line and there were practically none who agreed with the guest. Still, the in-studio guest always has the advantage over a caller because he is able to clarify a point even after the caller is off the line. Happily we keep the tapes as proof and there never have been any 18-second gaps, not to mention 18-minute gaps.

One example of mishearing that created nationwide repercussions by motorcycle enthusiasts was brought to my attention by a letter printed in *Cycle World*. It quoted me as saying on the air, "I don't happen to like people who ride motorcycles." The letter went on to say, "How is that for a closed-minded remark? In one statement this guy puts down more than five million people in this country. The thing that scares me is the number of people who idolize this man; his influence isn't to be taken lightly." Nor did the cyclists of the nation take it lightly. Mail came from such diverse places as Meridian, Mississippi; North Little Rock, Arkansas; Antioch, California; and Rock Island, Illinois.

Most letters were really very polite, but one letter said, "I don't happen to like people who don't happen to like people who ride motorcycles!" My favorite read, "I was truly sorry to hear that you don't like people who ride motorcycles. You have no idea of the great emotional pain it caused me when I heard that you didn't like me. I am terribly sorry that I have

offended a great man like you by my choice of transportation and recreation. I suppose by now you are on the verge of tears, and wish to apologize in person to me, but I realize that you are a very busy important man, so there is no need to bother with a special trip to Iowa, for you see I don't happen to like asshole talk show hosts either. With all my love." The postmark was December 23—not exactly in the spirit of Christmas.

Actually I didn't blame the letter writers. They were reacting to a partial misquote. I am always delighted to see Americans exhibit this kind of passion for their sport. They are eager to challenge anyone who defames it, and, even more importantly, anyone who defames an entire group of anything. Some letters compared my purported comment to putting down all blacks or all whites.

What I had said on the program was, "I don't like to see a group of motorcyclists coming up behind me on the highway because I get nervous worrying that I might inadvertently hit one. I know how little protection they have against a steel automobile."

As annoying as those who mishear are those who keep right on arguing even though they haven't understood what has been said to them. On one program a man called to talk about the plight of the black people in our society. He went to great pains to be sure that we understood he was not black. I inquired, "Well, then are you Caucasian, sir?" Indignantly, he retorted, "Hell no! I was born right here in this country."

Nothing seems to get callers more riled than to hear about abuse to an animal. Presidents come and go, natural disasters strike with regularity, and child abuse causes some comment, but look out if an animal is involved. The officials of Pacifica (a suburb of San Francisco) will never forget the Eight Ball caper. Eight Ball was a small, fat, one-year-old black cat who climbed a tall pine tree and wouldn't come

down even in a driving rainstorm that lasted all week. She did, however, complain long and loud as cats will do. Not only was the owner, Annette Bennady, worried about her cat, but she worked days, and the cat had kept her up three nights in a row.

Mrs. Bennady phoned the sheriff's office who told her to call the fire department. They said it was against their policy to rescue cats because they didn't have the manpower. They suggested she call the SPCA. The SPCA came out, but through a misunderstanding, thought the cat was already down, so they left. The rain and the cat's wailing continued another night. In desperation, Mrs. Bennady's mother phoned my program to ask for any help we could give her beleaguered daughter.

We began calling around and so did many of my listeners. The SPCA said it normally doesn't go out at night in the rain. The fire department said they just couldn't jeopardize the residents of Pacifica by rescuing cats. (It didn't help when we discovered that despite the fire department's policy to reserve their men for fires, they had sent two men out on Good Friday, with extra-long extension ladders, to the Bethlehem Lutheran Church to put up an Easter floral display on the church tower.) Wrath poured down on the Pacifica city fathers, the fire department, and anyone who could be contacted.

Before it was all over, we had involved the fire department, the SPCA, the utility company, the Department of Public Works, and the police. Calls flooded every Pacifica department open that night. Finally at 3 A.M. two policemen and a representative of the SPCA arrived with ladders and a long pole and got Eight Ball down from her 40-foot perch.

In the end Pacifica went back to being a quiet little town on the edge of the Pacific Ocean, Eight Ball lapped her milk and went to sleep, and the Hilly Rose Show continued in search of other mind boggling human-animal-interest stories.

Senator Hubert Humphrey was one of the most articulate spokesmen of our century and his energy was indefatigable. Preparing himself to run again on the Democratic ticket against President Ford, he cut across the country to get a reading on his popularity as a candidate. On one day in Los Angeles, he held hearings on some issue in the morning, kept up a whirlwind schedule of engagements throughout the day, and arrived at my studios at 10:30 in the evening. His entourage was totally wiped out, but Senator Humphrey looked as fresh as when he had started out early in the morning. I showed him an advance copy of *Time* magazine that presented a two-page spread on him and his wife Muriel. Senator Humphrey danced a little jig of happiness when he saw how favorably it came out. This invigorated him even more. Despite the cancer that was already wracking his body and the exhausting day, he plunged into the interview with relish.

Very few people can outtalk me since talking is my profession. But it also was Hubert Humphrey's forte and he did it superbly well. I no sooner got a question out than he was off and running with an amazing string of facts, figures, and places. It was almost impossible for me to interject a challenging word or question. When it was time for the newscast I couldn't even signal him to stop. I felt it would have been disrespectful to cut off a former vice-president of the United States and presidential candidate, so I signaled the newsman to hold off for a while. Twenty minutes later, when Senator Humphrey paused for a breath, I quickly announced the news.

During the break, I asked Senator Humphrey to stay and answer phone calls. He readily agreed, but all the younger men around him just groaned and pleaded with him to let them go home and get some sleep. Senator Humphrey reluctantly agreed and bounced out of the room as his aides dragged themselves out behind him.

After the show I felt I had not done my job as an interrogator. Humphrey had outtalked me at every challenge and I had found it difficult to get my point of view across. I felt as though I had failed my profession and my public. Imagine my surprise when I received the following telegram from a listener: "I thought you were extremely rude to Senator Humphrey from Minnesota. You cut him off and tried to interject your own damn ego into everything he said. Suggest you try to give the people honest reporting and don't cut off somebody as important as Hubert Humphrey."

My friends, it is impossible to win in this business.

The relationship between the listener and the talk show host is best exemplified by a call my screener received one night from a sweet-sounding lady. As usual, the screener asked what she wanted to talk to me about. The woman replied, "Oh, I'm sorry, I can't tell you. It is much too personal." And yet she expected to say it on the air to me, with more than a million people listening.

No matter what station a talk show host represents, the call letters still come out Radio WACKY!



3

The Talkers

There is no doubt that talk show stations generally rule the roost in their communities by attracting the largest number of listeners. If talk shows are such a success, why aren't there many more of them? "There isn't enough good host talent available," says Ben Hoberman, head of one of the nation's top talkers, KABC in Los Angeles.

Without question there are station managers who would disagree with Hoberman that good talk show hosts are hard to find. They seem to grab whoever is handy at the station and expect them to communicate expertly with the audience. I have heard program directors say, "All you need to do is open the phone lines and let the audience talk." Those are the stations that dabble in talk, and eventually go back to music.

The professionally run talk show stations look for hosts with a proven record of high ratings. The stations tend to steal from one another, or they wait for a long-time host to become available through a station policy change. Others try new types of hosts with vocational specialties such as consumer affairs, gardening, psychology, or restaurant report-

ing. In the main, the talk show host who has remained in the same city over a period of years seems to have the dominant listenership.

The host can be anything from a vile boor with a rapier tongue to a warm and empathetic friend. No matter what approach he uses, his main job is to keep the show moving and entertaining. I interviewed 21 major talk show hosts across the United States to see what common threads they had, if any. If your favorite doesn't appear in this book no slight is intended. I tried to put together a cross section of talk show hosts, not run a popularity contest.

One outstanding characteristic of every talk show host interviewed was EGO! We all feel we are doing something quite important in society and, as a result, we feel we are important. The degree may vary somewhat, but EGO is the name of the game no matter how sweet the host may sound on the air. Frankly, that does not seem to be a fault because, in dealing with all types of people who call in, the host must have an ego or he will find himself battered at the end of every program. Despite my own huge ego, I find myself wringing wet at the end of each show. During air time I feel like a sitting duck in a shooting gallery attempting to avoid the potshots coming from all directions. No matter how viciously a caller may attack me, I know I can handle that caller and come out on top. I know my audience will love me for it and call to praise me for it. What more could a healthy ego want out of life?

Another characteristic that most top-ranking hosts have in common is their uniqueness; rather, what they perceive to be their uniqueness. This will come as a shock to many of my fellow hosts (as it did to me in researching the book), but the truth is that hardly any are that unique. They all claim to work harder than the others. They all claim to personally know or have a special inside track on politicians and world

movers. With only three exceptions among those hosts surveyed, all started out in radio, but none as talk show hosts. They almost all indicated they attract young listeners above and beyond what other talk show hosts can attract. There seems to be little evidence of that in the rating books or the type of sponsors they attract. The fact is that in every part of the country talk shows basically appeal to adult listeners.

Before we meet the talkers, a word about the history of talk radio. There is disagreement about who really was the first major radio talk show host. Memories fail as to who was first when it comes to early giants such as Barry Gray, Jack Eigen, Alan Courtney, Ben Hunter, and others. Choosing to keep my friendship with all the greats of this industry, I will simply relate to you the things they told me. After all, they each had a major hand in fashioning what we now know as radio talk shows.

Jack Eigen

That wonderful humorist, Fred Allen, made Jack Eigen a household word in the late forties. For two years on his coast-to-coast radio program, he found some way to work Eigen's name into a comedy punch line. The audiences in New York roared with laughter because they heard the Eigen show nightly and understood the reference. The rest of the nation just thought the name was funny, at least the way Fred Allen said it, and they assumed Eigen was another member of Allen's Alley. This was Allen's tribute to the pleasure he received from listening to Eigen's show originating at the Copa. Passionately in love with New York, Allen felt Eigen's show tapped the heartbeat of the city better than anything else on radio.

In 1938 Jack Eigen was a brash young man operating as a Broadway-Hollywood reporter at New York station WHN. Some of his programs came from Jimmy Braddock's Restau-

rant, and his first out-of-studio origination had Mae West as the guest. In 1940 he broadcast remotes for WMCA from the World's Fair and was thrilled to have as his first guest the top performer in show business, Al Jolson.

But the idea of a regular out-of-studio program didn't take hold for Jack until 1947. He was at Toots Shor's Restaurant sitting with Monte Proser, one of the owners of the successful Copa Cabana nightclub. Proser was bemoaning the fact that the Copa's beautiful lounge was doing no business. Eigen convinced him to do an interview show from the lounge. It would be great publicity for the club and people would come to the lounge just to see Jack do the radio program.

In September 1947, Jack Eigen went on the air over WINS from the Copa. The first guests were Red Buttons and Milton Berle. They set a pace for the show that never let up. The show ran from midnight to 4 A.M. and it worked perfectly for show people to stop by the Copa after their own shows were over. It became "the" place to be heard, to unwind, and have fun. Long before television made inroads with Steve Allen, Jack Paar, and Johnny Carson using talk as entertainment, it was startling to hear big-name performers utilize their talents on a local radio program.

In the first year of the program, one of the listeners brought in a device that enabled the radio audience to hear the people who called Eigen over the phone. Up to that point Eigen could only repeat what the callers had said to him. It seemed like a good idea, but within a week the phone company objected to the use of unauthorized equipment. So Jack went back to repeating the phone conversations and waited for tape to be invented.

Eigen was doing so well he decided to open his own club, the Jack Eigen Guest Room. But the chemistry was not the same. The excitement of the Copa along with Jack's person-

ality had blended so well. In his own place Jack had to be a businessman as well as a radio personality—he worried about the customers, the food, the liquor, and tried to do a show at the same time. In Jack's words, "I was not a good businessman and it folded."

Trying to recreate the magic of the Copa years, Jack went to the famous Coconut Grove in Los Angeles. But the all-important chemistry still was not working. Jack was, and sounded like, a New Yorker. His style wasn't right for L.A.

At the height of Jack's popularity at the Copa, a young couple from Chicago sat down at the beginning of one of his programs and stayed until the end. According to Jack, they sent him a note: "We're here to steal your act." And in some ways they did. Mike Wallace and Buff Cobb opened a lounge radio show at the Chez Paree in Chicago over WMAQ. When Mike moved to New York and broke up with Buff, it was Eigen who was chosen soon after to take over the Chez Show. He was only offered a 13-week trial, but the chemistry worked, and he stayed in Chicago for 20 years offering his own brand of egotistical celebrity interview. Jack has been a celebrity himself in every community he has worked. Today, in semiretirement, he broadcasts from Ft. Lauderdale, Florida.

Although celebrities have been Jack's main program material, his most dramatic moment came when a woman called threatening to commit suicide. Only an Eigen fan could understand how he got away with it. He pretended he couldn't hear the lady and asked for her phone number so he could call her back. She gave him the number and before Jack returned the call, he was able to dispatch help.

One of Jack's most interesting interviews was with macho movie hero Gary Cooper. The star was so nervous his knees actually shook. This made Jack nervous, which made Cooper even more nervous. Cooper was so shaken by being

on live radio, he suddenly remembered another appointment two minutes into the interview and left.

Barry Gray

If any talk show host is legendary, Barry Gray qualifies. Although he was raised in Los Angeles where he first entered radio before Pearl Harbor, Barry Gray is Mr. New York. He has the style, the demeanor, the East Side apartment, and the salary to represent what a top New York personality should be. He has been a New York talk show host for over 30 years, 25 of those years with his present employer WMCA. There were a couple of tempestuous years in Miami Beach at the Copacabana from 1947 to 1950, but otherwise the tempestuous times have all been in New York City. Barry has gotten into more trouble than five other air personalities combined, but this characteristic is probably what endears him most to his New York listenership.

To hear Barry Gray tell it in his own book (*My Night People*, Simon and Schuster), he is just a nice guy standing around while the world seems to explode around him. His long-running feud with Walter Winchell came about because black entertainer Josephine Baker didn't get served at the Stork Club and used Gray's program to complain about Winchell not doing anything about it. Barry also writes in wide-eyed wonderment about his helping to break the color barrier in Miami Beach with a testimonial to Bill "Bojangles" Robinson. He followed that up by encouraging the Step Brothers to stay overnight in Miami Beach while playing the Copa. Black people did not do such a thing in those years. The club was firebombed and Barry took to packing a pistol.

Gray left Miami and returned to New York City, broadcasting from Chandler's Restaurant over WMCA. Like Jack Eigen he had a drop-in policy for stars of show business, politics, and journalism. Each night when he started his

program, he never knew who would be on. Now he books his guests in advance, but is tired of the guest who pushes a book or a product. He feels people shouldn't have to hear someone who has been all over town promoting their wares when they tune in his show. Basically Barry and his people now set out to find guests who are unusual. Generally the guests are experts in some field not highly publicized. If a publicist wants to book an author on the show, he must promise either an exclusive interview or that Barry get the author *first*, before any other show in town. With these "circuit" guests, Gray tries to ask questions that other hosts might not.

Barry's biggest fear is that someday he might develop the "Bob Elson syndrome." Bob Elson was a popular sports announcer at WGN in Chicago who had a program where he would meet the Twentieth Century Limited each day as it pulled into Chicago and interview whatever prominent guests were passing through town to change trains for the West Coast or other points. Bob was a great sports announcer, but terribly miscast as an interviewer. He would ask the same questions no matter who got off the train. One time Danny Kaye, who had been caught by Elson frequently, got off the train and was met with the standard questions: "What are you doing in town?" Kaye replied that his mother had died and he was going to her funeral. Elson persisted, "Are you going to be seeing any shows while you are here?" Kaye explained how much his mother had meant to him and that he was grieving. Elson then asked, "What restaurants will you be enjoying while you are here?" And so it went for the entire interview. Elson was not hearing one word Kaye was saying, he was just waiting to ask the next question.

To avoid the Elson syndrome, Barry chooses to rush right in where angels fear to tread. It is not unusual for him to greet a guest who is there to discuss human sexuality with a direct question about the penis and vagina. The guest usually

snaps to attention and so does the listening audience.

Barry prefers to spend most of his two hours of air time doing an interview with guests rather than on the phones with callers. He believes most callers want their own opinions reinforced and they contribute very little that is new to the program. In his opinion, the success of talk shows generally, and his program in particular, is to be able to eavesdrop on the conversations of well-known and well-informed people. "Eavesdropping," Barry smiles, "is our national hangup."

Alan Courtney

Many talk show hosts have come and gone in the Miami area, including such major talents as Barry Gray and Larry Glick, but Alan Courtney goes on as rock solid number one in the market. The year 1978 represents his thirtieth year doing his show and he bills himself as America's original open phone forum. He remembers his starting date June 8, 1949, because it was also his wedding anniversary. The woman he married, Bernice, now produces his program on WINZ.

Alan did talk radio interviews in New York in the 1930s, but like others, he took no phone calls. He tried many times to sell phone-ins as a programming technique to management but they balked at losing full control over what went on the air. Alan persisted in pointing out the similarity to live "man in the street" interviews that were so popular in the early days of radio, but with FCC and telephone company restrictions to bolster management's position, phone-ins didn't come to pass for many years.

Courtney is a strong conservative and he makes no bones about it. His rasping voice is instantly recognizable and his long run in one market gives him an insider's perspective on what Dade County and Florida are all about. People have

grown old listening to Alan Courtney, and their children were raised on the sound of his voice. He commands the respect of the state's legislators whom he frequently talks with on the air.

So successful was Alan's brand of telephone talk that two different broadcasting companies (Storer and Storz) asked him to create shows and break in talk show hosts for markets as diverse as Toledo, Akron, Atlanta, and New Orleans. The show he created in Birmingham, Alabama, is still on the air.

As with most major talk show hosts, Alan feels the key to success is massive preparation. He is beginning to feel, however, that today's callers are much less informed. Years ago listeners were ready with facts and references so it was possible to engage in a hot and heavy debate. Today's callers express unsubstantiated opinions and biases.

Courtney has been involved in many political battles and, with his large retired audience in Miami Beach, has been for many years a leader in the fight to do away with the earnings limitation on Social Security recipients.

Mike Wallace

In looking back to those who helped found the modern-day talk show, it must be remembered that there were many other pioneers who never went beyond chatting with each other. Tex McCrary and Jinx Falkenburg, Ed and Pegeen Fitzgerald, Dorothy Kilgallen and Richard Kolmar, Faye Emerson and Skitch Henderson were all based in New York. Certainly anyone who lived in Chicago in 1950 remembers the *Chez Show* starring Buff Cobb (granddaughter of humorist Irvin S. Cobb) and her brash husband Mike Wallace.

Mike Wallace was free-lancing in Chicago radio and interviewed Buff Cobb when she was a featured performer with Tallulah Bankhead in *Private Lives*. They fell in love

and wanted to get married, but both felt if she continued to tour with stage productions there wouldn't be much of a marriage. They dreamed up the idea of a husband and wife radio show which would originate from the Chez Paree nightclub in Chicago. They knew about similar programs in New York City, but theirs would combine the Eigen-type program with the couple-type show. Most important, they could settle in one place.

Mike has heard Jack Eigen's story of how the Wallaces came to the Copa and told Jack they were going to steal his act, but Mike strongly doubts that note was ever sent. He does admit they visited the show for a half hour, but doesn't feel the Chez Show was anything like Eigen's except that it came from a nightclub. The basic concept was that Mike and Buff would argue with each other about many topical matters. Wallace feels it could be compared to the Point-Counterpoint segment of his "60 Minutes" TV program, except that it was an actual discussion. Well-known guests would drop by and get involved in the argument. Listeners could participate by writing in and their letters would be read over the air. In addition, callers could phone in, though, without tape delay, all Mike and Buff could do was repeat on the air what the caller had said to them on the phone and then respond.

In 1950 the Chez Paree was "the" place for celebrities to see and be seen. Anyone working in town or passing through Chicago would gravitate to the Chez and drop into the lounge to spend some time with Mike and Buff. Chicago's resident celebrity columnist and TV host, Irv Kupcinet, was a frequent visitor. It took a while for Chicagoans to get used to this type of format because they were used to the laid-back style of Dave Garroway (who had moved on to New York). Sponsors were wary of the 11:30 P.M. to 1 A.M. time period, but an eager young salesman by the name of Jack Schneider (later president of the CBS Broadcast Group) sold out the show in two weeks.

Mike remembers that Buff had difficulty learning to interview. Her training was as an actress. They would take long drives while Mike would pretend to be someone like Betty Grable. He would then ask Buff to come up with 10 questions for Betty, which he would answer.

Wallace vividly remembers one guest—a young man who sold advertising for *Esquire* magazine. The guest said he wanted to publish his own efforts, perhaps things to do with advertising or entertainment. He also thought a few undraped ladies would get the attention of the magazine buyer. Wallace wasn't too impressed with his guest's idea, but he admired the man's resourcefulness and commitment to success. Hugh Hefner more than met Mike's expectations.

As with many couples who try to work together, the idea seemed ideal, but didn't prove to be. Mike and Buff found themselves carrying on the arguments well after the radio show was over and into the next day. At this same time CBS was opening its daytime television operations and offered the Wallaces their own network show if they would move to New York. They did move, but only Mike went with CBS. Buff went her separate way.

For a brief period Pat Murphy and his wife took over the *Chez Show*, but then Jack Eigen was brought in. Even though the program later originated from the Pump Room and then from the WMAQ studios, it was still the *Chez Show* to most Chicagoans.

Ben Hunter

On the West Coast Ben Hunter was braver than most and began his long-running KFI Night Owl program in April, 1949, with telephone calls put directly on the air without tape delay. In 11 years this top-rated program got caught only twice. Once a regular caller, after six months of very reasonable conversation, blurted out, "Last night, I fucked my neighbor's wife twice!" There was some talk of doing

away with the phone calls at that point, but they continued until a lovely Southern lady was discussing her daughter with great pride and allowed that her daughter was "a cute little fart." Happily tape delay was finally a reality and the station immediately installed it.

The Ben Hunter Night Owl Show was an institution in Los Angeles, and to this very day I get calls from old-time listeners who reminisce about the program. After 11 years, Ben couldn't stand the all-night hours and moved to local television in 1960.

Howard Miller

Abrasive, arch-conservative, and eminently successful telephone-talk show host Howard Miller has been a major force in Chicago radio for over 25 years. To the best of my knowledge, he is the only talker smart enough to *own* two radio stations instead of just working for them. He is a political infighter and works hard for the causes in which he believes.

A radio executive once sneered, "Howard has a huge audience, but most of them are Spanish-American War survivors. Chicago columnist Mike Royko pointed out that Howard has a very pleasant radio show. He added, "It's always nice to hear someone put in a good word for slavery." Howard believes he is just speaking out for American ideals and is proud that he is conservative. His listeners may not all agree with him, but they cannot help but get emotionally involved.

Howard started as a disc jockey in the days when "Top 40" meant Crosby, Sinatra, Como, etc., and he was always in the top of the ratings himself. He felt he should grow up with his audience and didn't want to be another vapid personality. So in 1958 he changed his WIND music show to an issue-oriented program and went to telephone talk.

The process was not an immediate jump. Miller started with phone calls to the stars of the records he played, doing a person-to-person approach. That caught the ear of gum magnate Wrigley and he put Howard on the full CBS radio network for three-and-a-half years with his records and interviews. But again Howard had the feeling that there were more important issues to be discussed, so he turned his full attention to the WIND show that allowed him to express his beliefs and argue with the audience.

Miller believes his uniqueness and durability over the years have come from holding to the courage of his convictions. That is also what got him fired from WIND after 21 years of service.

With his conservative outlook, Howard had much to say during the Democratic Convention in Chicago in 1968. The night of the riots Miller was doing a television program and, with the streets cleared by police, he and others were effectively locked in their studios. When the police allowed people to move freely again, Howard walked down Michigan Avenue and noticed Chicagoans, both black and white, huddling near visible police for protection.

The next morning on his radio program he mentioned the incident and said the police were bastions of decency. He indicated that Civil Rights leaders were doing their job, but the police needed recognition also for their job. Clearly passions were out of hand in Chicago during those bloody days and Howard got a call from the station manager suggesting that he stay away from the microphone for a day or two. Miller didn't like the idea but agreed. After a week of being put off, Howard filed suit against WIND for breach of contract. At the time his ratings showed that 58% of Chicago listeners were tuned to Miller.

After that Howard had brief programs on WGN, WCFL, and WMAQ, respectively, in Chicago, finally retreating to his own station in Rockford, Illinois. In the fall of 1977 he

returned to the Chicago market to be chief talker for WAIT. At this writing he has retired once again.

Like many other hosts, Miller is an avid reader—all the local daily papers, the news weeklies, the liberal journals, and private newsletters. He maintains close touch with the Illinois Capitol as well as Washington, D.C., frequently contacting legislators willing to help him.

Unlike most other talk shows, he keeps his guests down to three a week, with two days of complete open line. He is happy with the three-two mix because he feels that if too much time is devoted to an open line, the program becomes the same day after day.

Like Barry Gray, he feels he is a better listener than most. He refers to a Dorothy Parker story: She arrived at a party and told the hostess, "My mother just died." The hostess smiled cheerily and retorted, "Have a drink."

During the Vietnam conflict, Miller felt that it might be a nice gesture to offer to write to servicemen in Nam who had grown up listening to him. It was Christmas and he received more than 50,000 requests with addresses of loved ones overseas who would want to hear from Howard.

A few years ago the morale of the Chicago Police Department was very low because an anticipated pay raise looked like it was a lost cause. Even Mayor Daley didn't support it. Howard defended the police on his radio program and began to attend their meetings. He asked the people to support the police. Daley, under pressure, finally came around to supporting the raise and it went through.

Miller also pushed for legislation that provided for a free college education for the children of any policeman killed in the line of duty. He pulled the facts together, and his testimony influenced legislators who passed the bill into law.

Miller's most unusual interview was with a hooker. She described in great detail how she performed oral sex with her customers. The program had been highly publicized for

"adults only," so there were practically no complaints from the audience. It was a liberal education for a conservative.

Long John Nebel

Of the three talkers who started out to be something else, Nebel had the most interesting career by far. He was a pitchman. He was the kind of pitchman who worked the streets selling special pen points and throwing in the pens free. He roamed the Middle West as a teenager selling flasher devices for electric signs to retail stores and supported his parents. To raise himself above the other pitchmen and salesmen of the time, he opened Long John's Auction House on Route 46 in New Jersey near New York City. When an executive of WOR in New York stopped by the auction house and saw him sell, he felt John would be right for radio. It was a marriage made in broadcasting heaven. John not only could sell merchandise with utmost believability, he had a wide interest in the strange world around him that translated into fascinating listening.

In 1956 after a few misstarts, Long John Nebel began a midnight to dawn show on 50,000 watt WOR which was heard over the entire eastern half of the United States. He decided to specialize in psychic phenomena and Unidentified Flying Objects. Listeners began to pay attention to this weird voice in the night discussing weird subjects with weird people. The next day folks would tell others about the unusual happenings discussed on the Nebel program. The ratings soared higher than the UFOs.

John also created his own coffeehouse approach with guests. He surrounded himself with friends who were important to him. The spirited discussions lasted all night, and many times spilled over to after-broadcast conversation in a nearby breakfast joint.

Nebel has expanded his group to many of the top celebri-

ties and personalities of our day. But even now a guest must commit himself to the full five-and-a-half-hour program or he will not be allowed to participate. First-time participants are shocked to find that John casually walks out of the studio from time to time and does not return for 15 to 20 minutes. They are left totally on their own to keep the conversation going. People like the late Jackie Susann (his biggest fan) and Helen Gurley Brown just learned to settle in for some high-powered girl talk when that happened and the audience loved it.

Long John's basic theory is that no matter how a guest first starts out at midnight, by the time three o'clock in the morning rolls around, he will be an entirely new personality with all the stock responses beginning to crumble around him. He feels the guest will tell many things he would never have revealed in an hour interview.

WOR was not in the habit of paying large salaries and when WNBC offered more money, WOR simply wished John well. It didn't turn out all that well since WNBC is noted for changing its programming frequently. When they eventually plucked Long John out of his traditional midnight hours to an early-evening slot, it didn't work. Nebel then went to all-talk WMCA. His show was also picked up by 112 stations of the Mutual Network and was heard all over the United States for a year. Larry King of Miami now hosts the Mutual program.

There has been a major difference for some five years now. Well-known fashion model Candy Jones became Mrs. Nebel and shares co-hosting chores with John. He has been battling cancer and Candy was the right person at the right time for John. What started out as Long John's peculiarity of walking out on his own show became a necessity with the ravages of cancer and its treatment. Some nights John

doesn't appear at all, but his presence is felt strongly through Candy.

Nebel's favorite interviews were with President Lyndon Johnson (a fan of John's) and J. Edgar Hoover.

Candy says John's uniqueness comes from his curiosity in all subjects. "John doesn't read the book a guest may have written [though Candy does], yet he seems to have a knack for getting right to the heart of the subject to be discussed. John also has a temper and can be very insulting to a guest." His temper, his approach, and his salesmanship delighted the listeners for 25 years before he died in April 1978.

Larry Glick

Larry Glick is a wild man. He is the kind of person you can hear coming down the hall (which indeed is where I first heard his voice, waiting to interview him at WBZ in Boston). Displaced but confirmed "Glicknics" have called my show in Los Angeles to complain that there just isn't anyone around the West like Larry. They are right. He loves a good joke. He likes to be one of the people. He claims not to be qualified to do an issue-oriented talk show, but as Goldie Hawn will tell you, "You have to be bright to be stupid." Larry does not act stupid, but he likes to dwell on the little things in life and on techniques for self-improvement: How to lose weight; Should we stop smoking? Is there sex after death?

Before the FCC clamped down on all broadcasters, Larry used to phone people, not tell them they were on the air, and then proceed to create an enormous practical joke.

When Johnny Cash was making a picture in Israel, Larry put in a long-distance call to Cash with the audience listening. While the overseas operator was trying various locations

in Israel, Larry and the operator harmonized on a variety of Israeli-type songs to put the listeners in the mood. They never did get Cash, but Glick and the audience had a lot of fun.

Another time Glick decided to call the Pope in Rome. After talking his way through a variety of secretaries he got to the head secretary whose first question was, "Is this conversation being recorded?" Glick said it was. "In that case this conversation is over." And there was a resounding click in hundreds of thousands of ears.

Larry Glick tries to stay away from what we ordinarily call controversial. He is a hypnotist and deals easily with the occult. From midnight to dawn, he believes people should be entertained, not depressed. Larry will talk to anyone and tends to draw subjects from his callers, making even dull calls interesting.

One of his favorite stories over the 20 years he has done midnight broadcasts is about a man who called frequently and identified himself as "Bill from another planet." He would talk on and on about what occurred on that planet, and his voice was somewhat other worldly. Bill gave Larry his home phone number and said he could be called anytime. When things got a little dull on the program, Larry would dial Bill who often sounded sleepy but talked at length about his experiences. Finally Glick decided to invite Bill to the studio. The man who turned up was the eminent Professor John Cartwright of Boston University. Glick had been had—and he loved it.

Glick started in Jacksonville, Florida, and stayed there from 1953 to 1960. He moved to WINZ in Miami and continued building a following in the Florida market for an additional four years by having Glicknic picnics with everyone invited. These events drew large crowds who came out to have fun.

But Boston is now home for Glick. He thoroughly enjoys

his 10-year-old show on WBZ and hopes it never ends. He gets calls from 32 states and gives the impression that he has more fun than the callers.

Joe Pyne

Joe Pyne is the only other talker profiled in this book who has died. He was so unique, so detested, and so revered by so many that to ignore him is to write the history of the United States without including Teddy Roosevelt. In the profession, we frequently refer to the "Joe Pyne School of Talk Radio." Station managers and program directors use Pyne as an example of what they do *not* want their hosts to be.

Who can forget Pyne's put-down of a caller: "Why don't you go gargle with razor blades!" I once heard Pyne tell an incensed caller with a heavy Yiddish accent, "Take that yarmulke off your head and shove it down your throat!" This is the same Joe Pyne who, on the Saturday night of the Watts Riots, appeared on television, opened a desk drawer revealing a pistol, and looked casually into the camera saying, "Let them come. I'm ready for them." He had the audience, and the sponsors stood in line for the privilege of buying time on his programs.

Pyne came from abject poverty in Pennsylvania. He was a strong admirer of Jack Eigen and Barry Gray. Even though he was supposed to be a disc jockey in Atlantic City in 1954, he started taking calls between records. Later in Wilmington, Delaware, he developed into a full-time talk show host and found that controversy attracted attention. So much so that his life was threatened and his automobile blown up. When he moved to Canada in 1960 his celebrity grew by leaps and bounds, and he came to Los Angeles where his legendary approach to callers was appreciated much as Errol Flynn's wicked, wicked ways were appreciated.

Dick Whittington, archcomic and radio personality in Los

Angeles, was a very close friend of Pyne through most of Pyne's career, and believes he knew Pyne better than anyone. His descriptions of Joe are respectful but not reverent. Whittington believes Pyne had a fantastic and unusual sense of what people did not want to hear—and he said it! "Joe was a great showman. He wanted to be powerful and feared. He would go for the gut of the matter, and really didn't care which side he was on. He went for the effect. He never lost control in any situation. Coming from his poor background, his biggest interest was money and celebrity."

Pyne himself claimed to have read only one book, *The FBI Story*. He loved to use words, as long as they weren't too deep. He was a practical joker in his personal life and a self-made man.

Joe Pyne was outrageous. The more outrageous the better. Don Rickles is perhaps the closest approximation we have to Pyne, but Rickles is supposed to be funny. Joe Pyne took your breath away. There was nothing funny about his approach. If there was a pimple at the end of your nose, he would ask directly why you didn't cover your ugly face with a paper bag. Joe Pyne could not stand being bored and he felt the cardinal sin was to bore. That sin he never committed.

Jim Dunbar

Jim Dunbar came to San Francisco in 1962 because he did not want to be on the air. Twelve years later he terminated his highly successful radio telephone-talk show to concentrate on radio news and the "A.M. San Francisco" television show. He was tired of people asking him what he thought on various subjects when he already knew what he thought.

Dunbar accepted the job as program director for KGO radio in San Francisco because he was tired of being a rock jock and playing kiddie music. ABC wanted to turn this

50,000 watt station into a talk station and Dunbar went on the understanding he would do no air work. He hired Owen Spann, put Ira Blue into the nighttime hours when Les Crane left for New York, but found himself without enough budget to hire a talk personality for the afternoon show. Reluctantly he put himself in temporarily and stayed those 12 years building top ratings because he reacts to things and comes across as the average guy. People could relate to Jim at every level. When the elusive Zodiac Killer wanted to talk to attorney Melvin Belli before he killed again, he did it by calling Dunbar's program for all to hear.

Jim Dunbar lived through the nightmare that all talk show hosts fear most. KGO radio is located in the Tenderloin District, a truly raunchy part of town noted for its low life. Yet some executive decided it would be nice to place the studio directly on the street with a plate-glass window so passersby could watch the broadcast. There was even a speaker on the street so people could hear the shows. I worked in that studio many times and often wondered if someone I had put down might throw a bomb at me. Dunbar was on vacation and I was filling in for him when some men took out the plate glass and replaced it with bulletproof glass. I was shocked because I had assumed it had always been bulletproof and mentioned on the air that it was about time. Quickly three executives converged on my studio and, while a commercial was on, warned me not to mention it again because they had never tested the glass and had no plans to test it.

Imagine my horror when, a couple of years later, a deranged man actually walked up to the window and fired a few shots directly at Dunbar. More important, imagine Dunbar's horror watching those bullets banging against the window while he was on the air. The glass held, but the man walked into the offices, brushed past the receptionist, and killed a salesman who tried to stop him from entering. The

man, on furlough from a mental institution, claimed he had wires in his head and was picking up Dunbar constantly. In trying to piece the story together, Dunbar believes the man had tried to call on the phone but the screener wouldn't let him get through. He found his own way of getting to Jim.

Another incident that surprised many people was when Huey Newton (founder of the Black Panther Party), just out of jail, made an appearance on Dunbar's program. Dunbar called Eldridge Cleaver in Algeria thinking it would be an interesting conversation since the two Panthers hadn't talked to each other in many months. The Panther leaders immediately got into an ideological fight and Newton drummed Cleaver out of the party then and there.

Dunbar loves to poke fun at extremists. One aging lady caller took out after all the Commies in the country. Jim listened for a bit, then said, "Lady, are you aware that Lawrence Welk may be a Communist?" The woman gasped. "Who else would put on the Lenin Sisters? Besides, look at all the tunes he plays with 'red' in the title—'Red Sails in the Sunset,' 'The Lady in Red,' 'Red Roses for a Blue Lady.'" Jim went on and on in that vein and almost had the lady agreeing. Jessica Mitford heard the broadcast and did a piece in *Harper's* to recognize Jim's wit.

His favorite interview was with Bobby Kennedy just before he entered the presidential race. Jim had tried and tried to get Kennedy for the show, but had always been turned down. Finally he contacted Frank Mankiewicz who said Bobby was just about to have lunch at Jack's Restaurant and if Dunbar wanted to come down, he could try directly. When he walked in, Kennedy looked at him and said, "Dunbar you got it. If you came all this way you deserve the interview, but I won't answer any questions about politics, just my recent book."

Since there were strong rumors afloat that Kennedy was

going to run for president, Dunbar was eager to get a scoop. When Kennedy got on the air, Dunbar's first question was, "Senator, why don't you talk about politics in your book?"

Bobby kicked Dunbar and said, "That was a political question, wasn't it?" Dunbar responded, "Yeah." Kennedy smirked, "Not good enough; let's talk about my book."

Dunbar feels the audiences are getting much more sophisticated and he is happy to be off the telephones. He remains a major talent in San Francisco broadcasting; not bad for a man who was trying so hard to get *off* the air 16 years ago.

Herb Jepko

If you have never heard Herb Jepko and his "Nitecaps," you won't believe it when you do. He is the exact opposite of Joe Pyne and 99% of the successful talk show hosts in America. If Herb Jepko were any nicer, he would make Mary Poppins look like a witch. He is a parent's idea of the perfect son. He is the imaginary childhood playmate who always agrees and will listen endlessly to your stories. He just loves to hear about the weather, and actually sympathizes with your rheumatic pains. He will listen patiently while a caller complains about our giving away the Panama Canal, but usually will respond by wondering whether he should wear his blue suit or his black suit to a wedding on Sunday.

What Ben Hunter started with the "Night Owls" on KFI Los Angeles in 1949 was carefully studied by Jepko in his brief stay there as a publicist. In February of 1964, "Nitecaps" was launched on 50,000 watt KSL in Salt Lake City with host Herb Jepko. He even borrowed Hunter's idea of sending out a monthly magazine to bind the listeners and extended his business to a travel agency for "Nitecap" get-togethers, as well as selling records of the "Nitecap" theme song and many other related items. There is even a conven-

tion of Nitecappers four times a year in various parts of the country. "Nitecaps" is now heard on 12 strategically placed stations to provide a coast-to-coast listenership.

The enterprise (and that is indeed what it has grown to) is so large that Jepko can't even handle the air chores alone. "Nitecaps" is an eight hour program nightly that begins at 10 P.M. in Salt Lake City for a midnight start in the East. Stations pick up those portions of the show that best fit their needs, and, by the 6 A.M. signoff in Salt Lake City, eastern stations have long gone to their local morning programs while western "Nitecaps" are still going strong. Jepko himself is heard only on the first five hours of the program, having a stable of substitutes (chief of whom is "Rex") for anytime he is unavailable.

"Nitecap" studios have 27 phone lines, each designated for a specific part of the country. A listener in Arkansas dials the Salt Lake City number for his area and listens to it ring for many hours. But the caller knows Herb will not answer until he puts them on the air, so the long distance charges only begin when the listener goes on the air. There is no screener between Jepko and the caller. It is not at all unusual to have Jepko punch up Florida and hear nothing but snoring on the other end because the party waited so long. Callers are limited to five minutes and two calls per month.

Herb Jepko is another talk show host who started out to be something else. In his case, he wanted to be a doctor but the money ran out. Now in his 28th year of broadcasting, he has probably done more for the aches and pains of America than he possibly could have done as an M.D. He is a slick salesman which belies his homey act on the air. His basic philosophy is "Find out what people want and give it to them." He discovered there are hundreds of thousands of people who don't care about the economy, the world, or the latest fashions, and he gives them the human contact of an "over the fence" neighbor just chatting about this and that.

If he does have an occasional guest, it is the likes of Ray Bolger talking about his Tin Man role in "The Wizard of Oz" or Robert Merrill talking about the music America loves best.

Herb Jepko may be a lot smarter and a lot slicker than he sounds, but he couldn't possibly do the kind of program he churns out without having that smalltown little boy Middle America naivete buried down deep. When I talked with him about the most important and memorable thing he has done in broadcasting, he described his trip East to participate in the Bicentennial celebrations. He was invited by the mayor of Baltimore and described for the radio listeners the events on Chesapeake Bay. He went to the Kennedy Center and saw the President of the United States and Cabinet members.

For those of us who broadcast from the major centers such as New York or Los Angeles, it would just be another event. We see and interview the celebrities all the time. For Herb Jepko and his audience there remains a strong spark of Middle America and its simpler pleasures. That is why Jepko chooses to remain in Salt Lake City even though he broadcasts around the country. He doesn't want to lose that intangible something that makes millions of listeners believe he is a Nitecapper, just like them.

Ray Briem

Ray Briem also was born and raised in Utah, and also broadcasts from midnight to dawn (over KABC Los Angeles). There the similarities with Jepko come to a screeching halt. Described by his detractors as politically somewhere to the right of Attila the Hun, Briem digs into breaking world events with a passion normally reserved for religious fanatics who urge repentance today because the end of the world is coming tomorrow. He may know something the rest of us

don't: He has a UPI teletype ticking away in his home 24 hours a day, seven days a week; a fully equipped and transistorized recording studio to talk to newsmakers around the world by phone for playback during his late hours; a shortwave receiving set attached to a recorder so he can play back what is being said in world capitals to justify his point of view; and even a shortwave receiver in his automobile so he is never out of touch. The telephone in his automobile is just another convenience. One would think with all this he has a large staff. As with most of the talk show hosts, his staff boils down to one quite busy individual—Briem. Operating from a comfortable home overlooking the Pacific Ocean near Malibu, Ray says, "The world is my beat."

Because his station is owned by the American Broadcasting Company, he cannot use their worldwide correspondents as they must be paid a fee. So Briem has established his own network of correspondents by talking to ranking members of state-owned broadcasting operations much like our own Voice of America. In some countries this is not practical. The French broadcasters, for example, will not give an interview unless it is conducted in the French language. Ray used to get around that one by striking up a phone friendship with Pierre Salinger, once Press Secretary to President Kennedy and now resident and journalist in Paris. Since Salinger joined ABC, Ray has developed yet another news and information source.

Briem frequently calls Rhodesia and has discussed the African situation with leaders like Joshua Nkomo. When the terrorist "Red Army" held hostages in Kuwait, he phoned the Japanese Embassy there and got a young woman being held hostage to describe the events until she was forced to hang up by her captors. In 1973 he reached Los Angeles-based industrialist Armand Hammer (usually unavailable at home) in Russia. Hammer proudly said he was talking from Lenin's suite at the Kremlin. Briem, always one to get in his

conservative dig, replied, "Oh yes, you knew Lenin, didn't you?" Hammer beamed back, "Very well."

Ray prefers to tape interviews in advance, but on a breaking story there is no time. This can create problems like the time the Russians forced down an American airliner claiming it had violated Russian airspace. While on the air, Ray decided to call the tower at Haneda in Tokyo figuring they at least had to speak English. The man who answered spoke halting English and indicated he had no information. The call was transferred to the Air Ministry where, after a number of "Ah so's," he was finally given the top person. Again, many "Ah so's" while Briem went through the entire litany of what he was trying to find out. Finally understanding, the Air Minister proceeded to read the very same wire story Ray had in his own hand.

Ray Briem won the Freedoms Foundation Award and received a plaque of recognition from the California legislature for his reporting during the *Pueblo* affair in North Korea and his public insistence that the men of the *Pueblo* not be forgotten. At the time of the capture, there was precious little news coming out of Washington. Many of the crew members had families living in the Southern California area and Ray listened daily to Radio North Korea on his shortwave to bring news to his listeners. He began hearing the broadcasts of the confessions of the men and believed they were trying to tell us something. One man said, "If we are released, we will never do anything so naughty again." That may have seemed funny, but not when Ray recorded Captain Bucher's statement: "If our government doesn't appeal for some of us, it will mean death." Ray stayed with the story from the first day, focusing attention on the incident and never allowing the listeners to forget. These kinds of efforts make him believe talk shows are not only opinion makers, but a motivating factor in the society.

So far, one would believe that the Briem program is all

hard-hitting news revelations. Actually the bulk of the program is discussions with his listeners, many of whom sound like crotchety old ladies. He does demand, however, that each caller have something to contribute.

One of his regular callers is a man who claims Arab heritage and is always shouting and screaming about the Zionists. Ray will at some point quietly ask him to say good night, but "Mr. Nasser" (his nickname) continues screaming. Ray turns him down and gives the temperatures around the world, then brings him back in and the man is still screaming, "Tell them about the temperatures in Tel Aviv." Ray does while fading out the caller.

Another of the rare light features on the program is the three or four "Kooky Kalls" nightly. These are placed to quite small communities across the nation, frequently at the suggestion of listeners. Generally the call is to a police station because who would you call in Split Tooth at 3 A.M.? Occasionally the phone will ring directly into the town's one police car on patrol. When that occurs, Ray might ask the cop to let the listeners in Los Angeles hear the siren. The officer usually declines saying he would wake up the town. Once the cop said, "Sure, there's a guy speeding I can go after," and the siren howled. Ray usually pays off his calls by suggesting that when the officer is in Los Angeles, "Let's go to Disneyland." A few times the out-of-towners have taken Ray up on the offer and Ray has made arrangements for them to go.

Twelve years in the midnight spot at KABC has given Briem the largest share of the postmidnight Los Angeles radio audience by far. Others have tried to knock him off and come close, but Briem remains the "King of Midnight."

Jerry Williams

Jerry Williams has been in and out of Boston a number of

times and has been highly successful wherever he has gone. Chicago and New York know Jerry well, but he has been heard in Boston for 18 years between WBZ and WMEX where he now holds forth. Williams believes Boston provides tremendous opportunities for a politically oriented talk show because it is the seat of state, county, and local government. With politicians and bureaucrats at every level listening, they are much more accessible.

He started two-way telephone in Boston in 1957 and, while he concentrates on major controversial issues, he believes it takes entertainment talent to be a talk show host. In fact, his role model is humorist Henry Morgan and the memorable "Here's Morgan" network monologues. Jerry wanted to do humor and still gets a good one off now and then. He runs the gamut of emotions on his show; happy one moment, angry the next. "It is important to know how to be angry. When I am on the air four hours a day, I don't want to turn my audience off." This "entertainer's" talent for the unexpected keeps listeners tuned in.

Williams chooses to treat his callers as they treat him. If a caller starts out with, "Jerry, your attitude stinks," you can expect fireworks. If the caller begins with a reasoned point of view, Jerry will engage in spirited dialogue. Different from Miami's Alan Courtney, Williams thinks today's callers are well informed. He does agree, however, that the host must lead the discussion, and must not wait to see what the caller wants to develop.

It was Jerry who put together a network of talk show hosts to fight the Congressional pay raise in 1977 (see Chapter 9). Talk shows in Miami, Philadelphia, New York, Los Angeles, Salt Lake City, Chicago, San Francisco, Dallas, and others produced the biggest volume of mail since the "Saturday Night Massacre" of Richard Nixon's Administration.

Williams does pretty well on his own generating mail.

During the Watergate affair, Lowell Weicker appeared on his show and Jerry got him to agree to send out copies of a recent speech Weicker had made. The phenomenal response caused Weicker to ask for a halt, suggesting, "Next time, I'll offer and your staff can send it out."

Jerry Williams is politically liberal and sees himself as having a basic human-rights position when it comes to the upward mobility of blacks and other ethnic minorities. He believes in the brotherhood of man, but it is dangerous to talk about race in Boston. The problems of integration at South Boston High are much too familiar to the nation. Passions run very high and the media (Jerry included) is wrongly accused of only reporting white attacks on blacks while ignoring black attacks on whites.

In the late fall and early winter of 1977 Jerry found himself in the eye of the storm. The charming antique store run by his wife Teri in the small, normally peaceful, suburb of Milton had its windows shot out. Jerry refused to be intimidated and stayed with his support of minority causes. The windows were broken again and there have been continued veiled threats. Information coming to Jerry indicates it is the work of a semiunderground organization from South Boston, but he has been unable to prove it. Teri and Jerry Williams believe their civil rights have been violated because they have been forced out of business by the hoodlums. Yet, Jerry continues his firm support of his deepest human rights convictions on the air.

While Barry Gray prefers to talk with his guests, Jerry would much rather deal with his callers. He feels they are mainly interested in survival issues such as taxes, Social Security, auto insurance, union dues, and the other day-to-day problems of economic survival and this is where he is now directing the program discussions. Jerry Williams is

tough, knowledgeable, and accessible. Bostonians appreciate his style.

Michael Jackson

When you talk about style to Los Angeles listeners, you are talking about KABC's Michael Jackson. He has been the 9 A.M. to 1 P.M. host on this all-talk station for 12 years. He also hosted a daily taped 6 A.M. interview show on KABC television for which he was consistently awarded the local Emmy. In 1977 he won two Emmys. In early 1978, he switched to L.A.'s public TV station KCET where he is seen two times daily. His radio audience continues to grow yearly and he is far and away number one in his time period. Michael confided to me recently that his growing reputation scares him because it may outstrip his ability to meet the image.

Jackson started with a terrible handicap, which he now believes is one of his strongest assets: He has a pronounced British accent. Yet his voice and accent are easy on the ears, he never loses his temper and he can put down a caller or guest with such a squelch that it stings.

Perhaps the best example of this is an interview he did with ex-Nixon hatchet man Charles Colson, who has made a second career out of being a "Born Again Christian." Colson went through the litany detailed in his book. As the interview was nearing its end, Colson kept asking Michael exactly when the interview would be over. It began to annoy Jackson and finally he retorted (off the air), "When the big hand is on the twelve!" Finally the moment came to end the show. Colson reached over to take Jackson's hand, looked deeply into his eyes, and said, "I don't think you believe I found God." Michael looked just as earnestly into Colson's

eyes and said, "Oh yes I do sir. I only wish you had found him a year earlier."

Michael was born in Great Britain and spent his childhood in South Africa. He always wanted to be in radio in Los Angeles, but it took many stations and cities along the way to achieve this pinnacle—morning disc jockey in Springfield, Massachusetts; rock jock at KYA in San Francisco; and a tea and crumpets type of all-night talk show (somewhat analogous to the "Nitecaps") at KEWB in Oakland, California. *Time* magazine took note of this strange talk show host with the British accent in an article that brought offers from two stations in Los Angeles, including KABC.

Michael chose KHJ instead because he had an executive friend there who was a smooth talker. Jackson bombed and was picked up by CBS station KNX. He was always at odds with them because of the tight network policies that interfered with what he wanted to do. Finally KABC beckoned again and success struck.

Like many other top talkers, Jackson claims he works harder than the others. There is no dispute that he works hard, but his real success comes from the way he works. He begins his morning at the studio at seven o'clock looking over the breaking news stories of the day (7:00 A.M. in Los Angeles is 10 A.M. in Washington, D.C.). Working out of a tiny, closet-like studio, he begins to call top governmental leaders, knowing they are all at their desks at that time of the morning. If there is to be a debate or congressional hearing that afternoon, he will call a member of the committee and record the conversation. If the stock market rose or fell sharply he might call economist Milton Friedman or Paul Samuelson and record the call. He anticipates his listeners' interests as much as possible. It is not unusual to hear a caller later in the morning raise a current subject and

ask Jackson to try to get the authority. Jackson can easily promise he will in the next hour because he already has the interview on tape.

By nine o'clock he is ready to go on the air for four hours with a mixture of politics, psychology, entertainment, national or local issues, and guests. Some guests are in the studio, others are on the phone. Frequently an issue will hit while he is on the air and he will get the major participant on the phone directly.

Jackson says his motto is that of the British Broadcasting Company—Enlighten, Inform, Entertain! He likes to show hospitality to all callers and guests. He believes interviewing is a process where you get to know the guest, establish a rapport, and *then* ask the tough questions. "I do a better seduction than a rape." After a lengthy interview with Hubert Humphrey, Michael asked, "Sir, you were vice-president under Lyndon Johnson. As next in line of succession, didn't you ever have the feeling you wanted to break his neck?" Humphrey shot back, "Let's just say leg, Michael."

Jackson books his own guests by gut instincts. Are they newsworthy, informative, or entertaining? He feels his best guest was Israel's Moshe Dayan because he was an incredible challenge and asked Michael as many questions as he was asked. Some guests such as Milton Friedman almost become regulars on the program.

Jackson sees Los Angeles as the focal point of the world. "It is the spawning ground of ideas; the womb of the gods. Do you realize," he asks incredulously, "that Los Angeles produces a new religion every month?" He also points out that Los Angeles has a higher percentage of people who have gone to college and he pegs his program just a little bit higher intellectually than any other talk show host in the

country. Perhaps that is why he has built a reputation as Los Angeles radio's class act.

Bob Grant

Bob Grant is absolutely the right talker for New York City at this time. Barry Gray may project the urbane image, but Grant is the exposed underbelly of the society. He is tough; he is colorful; he is aggressive. His conservative stand on issues appeals to the Irish-Jewish-Italian ethnic groups that heavily populate New York. A caller who doesn't get to the point quickly is met with, "Look pal, you got something to say or get off!" Grant has that same raspy, gutsy quality in his voice that endears Alan Courtney fans in Miami or Howard Miller fans in Chicago. You either love him or hate him, but either way you listen.

It is surprising to learn that Grant's feelings of accomplishment come not from his political activism, but from the realization that he gives hope to people. He tells about the couple whose son had died and they were bereft. Daily visits to his graveside only deepened their depression. In utter despair, the husband called on the air and Bob responded to their intense feelings of hurt. He talked about all the reasons for living and what the couple could provide for each other during the remainder of their lives. He gave this couple and all those listening the feeling that all is not lost. The man called a few days later to say Bob had given them a new perspective to go on living. It was not a tea and sympathy conversation that made the difference. It was tough talk the way New Yorkers understand life.

Yet, Grant is a comparative stranger to New York, having come there from Los Angeles in 1970. He went to L.A. after 10 years as a staff announcer at CBS in Chicago to be half of the comedy team of Condyllis and Grant, heard for two years on KNX.

Unemployed after KNX, he finally latched on to a Sunday

only job at L.A.'s major talker KABC. When Joe Pyne walked out on his daily show, it was Bob Grant who took over and, perhaps in attempting to fill those giant shoes, he took on some of Pyne's abrasive ways. He also followed Pyne to KLAC before making the jump to WMCA in New York.

Grant feels many talk shows are the same around the country, but New York is more colorful, more aggressive, more of everything—including heart. He feels New Yorkers can bristle more easily, but they don't hold a grudge and can be the softest folks in the world.

Proof that Grant can stir up the folks to participate came as he tied up traffic in midtown Manhattan at 40th and Madison when he asked listeners to come out and protest against the attitude of the American Civil Liberties Union. Grant feels the ACLU is only interested in the criminal's rights, not the citizen's rights. More than 5,000 angry listeners created a massive traffic jam at midday. The usually unimpressed New York newspapers gave it full coverage, complete with photos. On the strength of the huge support he received on this and other issues, Grant thought seriously about running for mayor in 1977, but when Barry Farber made the move Bob felt two talk show hosts in the race were one too many. He settled for taking Farber's spot on the air at powerful WOR.

Bob's favorite interviews are those where he and the guest are able to forget they are doing an interview program and "get it on" as people. That is what he tries to do with his callers, as well, but when you hear him say, "Look paaaaal," you can get ready for fireworks.

Wally Phillips

Wally Phillips is big, big, big in Chicago radio. If you want to reach the people of Chicago, this is the place to appear. But it is not easy to get on the program. Wally himself

doesn't know what will be on each day's show until he glances at the morning paper. This is not the normal telephone-talk show heard in other markets. Many times there are no calls from listeners. Sometimes music, sometimes none at all. Sometimes he will pick up the phone and call Illinois Senator Charles Percy to "see what's happening." Basically Wally talks about what Chicago is talking about. The day I chatted with him there was a huge ground fog that tied up traffic severely. That was Wally's topic of the day. He may attempt to pair up singles, run a Christmas fund for children, or incite public indignation over a "rabbit run," in which youngsters in downstate Illinois were encouraged to beat rabbits to death with a club. Through Wally Phillips and 50,000 watt WGN, Chicagoans have awakened to "their" program since 1968. They are made to feel part of what's going on in the city.

Phillips started with a different kind of program and his first show involved public apathy. He received two phone calls during the entire program. "That's apathy," says Wally.

Another time, there was a transmitter failure and an irate lady called on the phone, which Wally answered directly. She demanded to know why they were off the air and Wally patiently explained it was a temporary situation. Indignantly the lady snapped, "Well, you certainly could have made an announcement!" and hung up on him.

For a man who has no planned format and who is number one in the number two city in America, Wally Phillips is an amazingly "all together" person with few pretensions and simple straightforwardness. Midwesterners know a fellow spirit when they hear him.

Owen Spann

San Francisco is a tough radio market for a talk show host but Owen Spann seems to amble through, secure that his

morning show will delight the homemakers, traveling salesmen, and whoever else is available between 9 A.M. and noon. Once he took a flyer to New York to host NBC's "Monitor," as well as a WOR show. A year later, KGO in San Francisco welcomed him back, as did the audience. He is not particularly snappish, he has no unusual voice characteristics, and, in fact, he sounds like any person anywhere. Perhaps that is his strength. What he does do is a tremendous amount of preparation and conducts one of the best interviews on radio according to many "professional" talk show guests themselves. He has a genuine interest in everyday matters in general, and interpersonal relationships in particular. San Francisco has more psychologists and pseudopsychologists per square inch than anywhere. Owen is just as much at home discussing gardening, politics, or ecology. He enjoys entertainment shows, but finds show business people a royal pain and rarely uses them anymore.

On one show Janis Paige, who was headlining a theatrical production, appeared with Owen. He had the newspaper reviews of both major critics and they were contradictory. Paige objected to his reading the reviews at all but Owen allowed that it was his show. She angrily left and Owen proceeded to read the reviews.

Before the 1976 New Hampshire primary, Owen had a former governor of Georgia on the program. He opened by asking Jimmy Carter, "Are you out of your mind running for President of the United States?" Carter said, "Yes, but I'm going to win." Owen recalls that Carter had that special something that makes men stand out.

Owen is basically liberal. He feels San Francisco is a liberal and quite free community (evidence the beatniks and hippies who flourished there). "People are more open here and, therefore, the host can be more open in what he discusses." He used to think San Francisco was unique, but now realizes his listenership includes the far-flung small

towns of northern California like Santa Rosa, Hayward, and San Jose. He is beginning to feel a trend in his area back to the middle-of-the-road and away from excessive liberalism.

Pressed as to why his main strength seems to be with interviews, he admits that, in addition to the heavy homework, he has interviewed so many people over the years, he has come to know almost as much about the subject as the so-called expert. Owen chooses his guests based on whether the subject is one of the basic issues important to his community. It has to be something that affects everyone.

If he gets incensed about an issue he will try to coalesce public opinion. A bill was introduced into the California legislature that would preclude selling any real estate without a realtor, and that included one's own home. Owen kept publicizing the bill until it died.

If there is such a thing as a typical telephone-talk show, Owen Spann probably hosts it. With such a wide diversity of life-styles in the San Francisco Bay Area, it is probably this very normalcy that makes it so popular.

Sally Jessy Raphael

Women telephone-talk show hosts are a rarity. Whether it is chauvinism or whether audiences just don't respond to women as well as men has been discussed by executives for a number of years. When the FCC took an interest in how many women worked in broadcasting, the number began to rise quite slowly.

Sally Jessy Raphael, who does the morning show at WMCA New York, is the rare exception. Her father was an ardent feminist and she was raised to believe there was no difference in the sexes. She has apparently convinced management and listeners of this over the years. She has worked at 17 stations in 12 markets, starting in San Juan, Puerto Rico. At the age of 22 she was making \$44,000 per year, and

that was before inflation and taxes made a mockery of big salaries.

Sally also fits the New York scene because, as she puts it, "I let all the varicose veins of my mind hang out." She projects the image that she fails a lot, and goes into great detail to show she is just like everyone else. She claims not to be beautiful (quite arguable), but has a great personality. Actually her personality is her Latin temperament and that certainly strikes a responsive cord in the heavy Puerto Rican and Latin ethnic groups of New York. She literally does whatever she feels like on the program. One day that may be a stream of consciousness about her emotions, and the next day it may involve playing games with the audience. It sounds like she may not know where she is going, but she is directing the audience to the response she wants. Raphael proclaims, "All that matters is that we are real. If it is truth, they love you. It doesn't matter if you are negative or positive." She chooses to always be positive.

Trained as a reporter, Sally graduated from Columbia University's radio department. During the Kent State riots she called the Kent campus radio station and said she would accept collect calls from the students. She and her audience received a whole different perspective from that provided by the regular news sources.

Her sense of humor is evidenced in the time the zoo needed a gorilla. She called another zoo and placed her bid at a gorilla auction. Then, on the air, she called various airlines trying to book first class transportation for her gorilla. After all, he would need extra seat room and a special diet.

She adores people, which may be why they respond so positively to her.

Paul Benzaquin

Paul Benzaquin wrote for the *Boston Globe* for 12 years. He

brings to radio a garrulous ability tempered by the caustic Lou Grant image of the old-time newsman. His training has been invaluable at such times as when a woman called his program and, in great detail, told how she was going to commit suicide. She talked about washing her clothes, leaving her apartment neat, paying her bills, etc. Paul used every source he had from his newspaper days to track her down. He did, just as she had gotten to the final item on the list she had read on the air.

Benzaquin started talking at WBZ in 1963 and has done so continuously, except for a couple of brief returns to newspapering. His impact on Boston has been so strong that, when John Volpe was governor, he was known to phone Paul's show from his limousine to set a few matters straight. More recently, Paul feels he can make a better contribution by dealing with "people problems" rather than concentrating on politics. He has many opinions on child development, believing that there is much to be learned about raising a competent human being.

Benzaquin does something unique as a talker: He writes two pages of zingers to put between commercials. There are no double- or triple-spot commercials on his show.

While many talk show hosts try to limit regular callers, Benzaquin differs. He finds some to be quite useful to the program, so he has instituted a "Conversation Corps." On slow evenings he calls them to see if they want to talk. On predictably poor caller-response nights, holidays for example, he may even invite some of his regular callers to the studio. Because he deals with many generic topics such as "how to cut your lawn," lots of listeners "are damned glad to share their information because they are proud of what they know." He believes they call because they feel deeply on subjects and he also believes that, "talk is vital if we are going to make our republic work."

Ed Busch

In August, 1973, when Ed Busch started at WFAA in Dallas, he was frightened that the telephone wouldn't ring. There had been no other talk show in town and people weren't used to participating. He should have known that folks in Dallas are like folks everywhere else. They like to argue and are quite eager to let everyone know what they think. Within one year Ed tells me he had a higher name recognition than the mayor of Dallas.

Among the "professional" talk show circuit guests we polled, Ed ranks at the top of those who are not only prepared to discuss the subject, but give one heck of a counter argument. He rarely takes anyone's word for anything.

A few years ago economist Dr. Peter Beter (that is his real name) appeared on the Ed Busch program and claimed the gold in Ft. Knox had been spirited away by the Rockefellers. Many talk show hosts, including myself, picked up on this exciting story and this exciting guest. The story sounded so unreasonable though that most of us just played along and gave Dr. Beter an airing for the entertainment value. It surely turned on the phones.

Busch decided that everything in government was suspect and this was worth pursuing to its conclusion. He enlisted the aid of Tom Valentine, who wrote a story on Dr. Beter's theory for the *National Tattler*. Other tabloids picked it up and Busch joined Dr. Beter in asking that the vault doors at Ft. Knox be opened for the public view. Congressman Phil Crane of Illinois and other legislators joined the demand and, finally, Mary Brooks, Director of the Mint, agreed to unseal the doors for the first time since President Roosevelt was in office in the thirties.

A small entourage, including Ed Busch, went to Ft. Knox

where the first vault was opened. The gold had a red sheen to it and Busch questioned if it was real. He was assured it was coinage gold and that it had a copper content which made it red. A second vault was opened which was totally empty and the assembled group was allowed to walk in. Noting graffiti on the wall left by the workmen who built the vault in the thirties, Ed Busch immortalized himself with his handy flair pen by adding his own name and radio station call letters.

With a breathless Dallas waiting to find out if there really was any gold in Ft. Knox, Busch originated his program that night from WHAS in Louisville with Dr. Peter Beter as his guest. Dr. Beter still complains that they only showed one vault with gold: "Where is all the rest of the gold?" Busch has no complaints; he is the only talk show host whose show is promoted on the walls of Ft. Knox.

Busch has recently dropped his heavy emphasis on psychics and extraterrestrial investigations to spend more time with service-oriented features such as child care, personal health, and self-improvement subject matters. Having worked in Cleveland, Detroit, and San Francisco, as well as Dallas, he believes there is no difference in the callers in any of the cities. In fact, Ed believes they are interchangeable.

Busch's favorite caller was a lady who justified a point she was making by quoting the Bible. Ed said, "Sorry, I don't read the Bible." The lady snapped, "Then what the hell are you doing on the radio?" and banged the receiver.

Barry Farber

Barry Farber has taken over the syndicated television series left vacant by the death of Lou Gordon. Both have reputations as "killer" interviewers and compulsive talkers. Barry's

approach is to "penetrate the ostensible" (*ostensible* defined as "intended for display").

Farber came to WOR in 1962 from North Carolina and still has a slight southern accent. His programs were popular all over the Eastern seaboard, but he resigned his midnight to dawn show to run in the 1977 New York City Mayor's race. He also ran against Bella Abzug in her 1970 Congressional race.

As a talk show host, Farber was frustrated by being at ringside constantly watching and reporting the fight rather than jumping into the ring himself. He was tired of watching the candidates manipulate people and he was tired of the "assault on the public interest by the public interest." Barry feels it is an easy transition to politics because in broadcasting one is used to ratings and every day is an election day.

For Barry Farber, "The role of the journalist is to act as the ammonia that cuts through the political grease." His great delight is to "de-gee-whiz-ify" lawyers. His colorful and never-ending stream of articulated ideas makes him an ideal match and incisive questioner of the slickest idea merchants.

In short, Farber is a fighter. He got involved privately with a financial investment in a sex therapy business because he felt it made a positive contribution to this overanalyzed field. His political opponents and other enemies have held him up to public ridicule claiming he is (or was) a pornographer. Barry feels these allegations have hurt him politically and he has never won a sizable vote in New York. Part of his lack of support may come from his running on the Conservative Party ticket, which is an offshoot of the Republican Party that does poorly itself in New York.

Farber believes talk shows are important because "loneliness is a killer. They bring the world to the listener and make him feel he is a part of it. I'm not even a lawyer, but I am out getting involved. I want the listener to feel he can do the same—and do it!"

Other Talkers

There are so many other talkers who have been and are a part of the history and development of talk radio all over the country. In Los Angeles I can immediately think of Pamela Mason, Reed Browning, Mort Sahl, Les Crane, Bud Daly, Sal Mineo, Stan Lomax, Elliot Mintz, Joel Spivak, Marv Gray, Jack Wells, Steve Allison, Ron McCoy, Carole Hemingway, Mr. Blackwell, Elmer Dills and that only scratches the surface. In San Francisco the names Joe Dolan, Pat Michaels, Van Amburg, Roy Elwell, Jim Eason, Bob Trebor, Ira Blue, Don Chamberlain, Ron Owens, Art Finley, Bob Dornan, and many more come to mind. In Schenectady, New York, Bill Miller is the man. In Pittsburgh, John Cigna reigns supreme. There's Bob Salter and Bob Lee in Salt Lake City; Fred Fiske in Washington, D.C.; Alan Christian in Baltimore; David Newman in Detroit. Chicago has Bill Berg, Ed Schwartz, Clark Weber, Bob Collins, Jack Stockton and so many more. Boston knows Guy Manila, Avi Nelson, to name only two. New York has Sherrye Henry, Alex Bennett, and Arlene Francis. The names and memories are endless for dedicated talk show listeners. Perhaps one day I will have the opportunity to write an encyclopedia naming all the talk show hosts, but for now it would be a monumental task.

Before we leave the talkers themselves, a word about Bill Ballance who sent shock waves through talk radio much as Elvis Presley did with rock music. In the early seventies Ballance talked to women—only women. He talked openly about their sex lives. He was not pornographic because he had a unique style that utilized the English language entertainingly and provocatively. His ratings soared and 500 hosts across the country copied him, but they did not have his style. Inevitably the imitators became pornographic and the FCC stepped in. Even though he was not the offender, just

the originator, KGBS (his home station in Los Angeles) cracked down on Bill and his ratings suffered. At the time he was syndicated on over 1,000 radio stations. Bill then joined KABC and restricted himself to discussing love-related problems. Guest professionals in the field frequently advised the callers, but the show was never the same. Recently he moved to KFMB, San Diego, continuing his unique format. "Bill Ballance," as Jack Mabley of the *Chicago Daily News* pointed out, "has many imitators, but no rivals."

While no one started out to be a talk show host, over the past 30 years they have evolved into a very important part of the communications media. Having looked at the talkers, let's now take a look at the callers and the listeners. Without them, there would be no telephone-talk shows.

4

The Business of Talking Back

The Dutchman, Lefty Louise, Mr. Asia, Grandma, The Princess, and many others had “handles” long before CB radio came into existence. These are the regular callers who both enhance and plague most talk shows across the nation. Frequently they are as much a part of the program as the host himself.

The bulk of the callers are everyday folks at last inspired or angered to phone in. They are the one to two percent of the listeners who will *ever* pick up the phone, dial, wait up to two hours, and *finally* get to be heard over the air.

Psychologist Garry Shirts, formerly with the Western Behavioral Sciences Institute, wrote in the *San Diego Union*, “One of the captivating qualities of a call-in show is that the listener feels that he or she can jump in at any time and influence the course of the conversation. All he has to do is dial the number, wait a few minutes, and suddenly he is expressing a view to a few hundred thousand people. The inveterate listeners of call-in shows keep one hand on the telephone ready to dial if it seems necessary or appropriate.

Those riding in cars stay on stay on the lookout for telephone booths the way a glider pilot looks for a landing spot.

"Of course, if everyone listening were to call in at the same time, as it sometimes seems to happen, it would be impossible to express an opinion. But it is the chance to affect the course of the program which sustains much of the interest in such shows and which provides their unique quality. Letters to newspapers often are hard to write, and it takes a few days before they are printed. Few people have the courage to reply on camera to a television editorial, and the letters written to the station are rarely read over the air."

It doesn't work quite as simply as Dr. Shirts describes the mechanics of talk shows, but the important thing is that it *seems* to work that way. What Dr. Shirts is expressing is the feeling most listeners have when they listen to talk shows. It is their program. It is their contact with the world. If they wanted to, they could correct the host or one of the callers who, in their opinion, doesn't have the facts. The door appears to be open and, in most cases, that is all that is important, the seeming appearance of accessibility to the rest of the community.

In actual fact, between 98% and 99% of the audience NEVER calls. These are the conversational dropouts waiting for someone else to call the show and speak out for them. Two-way telephone-talk radio, like almost all sports in America today, involves a handful of active participants *and* the huge mass of spectators or passive participants called, in this case, "listeners."

The vast majority of listeners simply lack self-confidence. I have had the unnerving experience of talking from home to phone-in programs across the country. I am nervous, dry of mouth, and generally kick myself for not putting things more clearly or cleverly. Yet I can calmly walk into my studio and talk through the microphone to the telephone callers without a trace of anxiety. It is easy to empathize

with those who say they are first-time callers and continually apologize for their presentation. The difference is clearly that the talk show host has the power to terminate the conversation at any point, and is trained to communicate ideas; this ability to communicate intimidates many would-be participants who feel they can't be as persuasive.

The majority of listeners are doing something else: washing dishes, sitting in the park, driving an automobile, working in the garage, selling at a retail store, and hundreds of other situations that don't lend themselves to waiting on the telephone line. An amazing number of high school and college students claim they are listening while doing their homework.

As good as a telephone-talk show host may be, he needs the right kinds of callers to play against. There is some controversy about that statement, but most hosts do use screeners to eliminate drunks, profaners, and three-year-olds who just happened to dial the on-air number. It is not unusual to ask the listeners to call in and ask a guest, such as Governor Jerry Brown, questions, only to have a caller want to talk about his hernia operation. Talkers such as Bill Gordon in San Diego blend all calls together without regard to subject matter or what guest is in the studio, but most prefer the control of a screener, who can put germane calls directly on the show.

Screeners on some programs such as Michael Jackson's or Howard Miller's can jump on a subject as soon as it comes up on the program and try to get the person directly involved in the discussion on the phone for an interview. Others such as Jerry Williams find the screener useful to keep the regulars from taking over the program.

Yet someone like Herb Jepko feels screeners would only get in the way between himself and the audience. He, like some others, feels he can overcome anything a caller throws at him.

Ed Busch believes that callers are important, but that the listening audience is much larger and they are the ones to be satisfied. He uses the screener to play the callers as though they were records. "I play the best parts and move on," says Busch. "It also means I can take relevant calls without losing the thrust of the program as many other subjects are brought up."

Frequently callers will bring subjects into the open that those of us in the media ignore simply through lack of personal experience or exposure. A young girl has run away from home and wants to return, but is afraid. A mother calls to say she has discovered her son is taking dope and doesn't know how to handle the matter. A young woman is losing her boyfriend because she refuses to sleep with him before their scheduled wedding. A teen gang member calls to question why so many people are down on the gangs when they are only a means of self-protection. A senior citizen is desperate because he is being evicted tomorrow and has no place to go. A young woman is pregnant and her sexual partner won't even phone her. The gamut of human experience seems to parade through the call-in lines. The response from those with similar problems eager to offer advice and list places to go for counsel aids not only the immediate caller, but the uncounted thousands of others who are inspired by the show to take the remedial actions society offers.

Callers can create problems with how the program sounds over the air. Every talk show host can deal with a considered argument, most can handle an emotional caller, and the profaner is easily dealt with through use of the tape delay mechanism. Most of us develop a sixth sense about trouble calls and are prepared with a finger on the button long before the call gets out of hand.

The real problem comes from the caller who has nothing

to say. "My wife and I think you are wonderful." "I never miss your program." "Keep up the good work." "My children think you are part of the family; we listen every night." "I agree with you completely." Everyone likes to hear compliments, but privately, off the air. When you are broadcasting to millions of listeners, every available minute of air time should be utilized to inform or entertain. There is nothing valid that comes from hearing someone else continually complimented.

A somewhat similar problem is the caller who takes 30 seconds to make a reasonable point and then has nothing more to contribute. Having waited perhaps an hour to add his 30 seconds he feels he is at least entitled to say it a few more times. Anyone can say anything in three minutes or less. The problem is that school never taught us to be concise or to be lucid in our thought processes. Most callers become redundant and a skillful talk show host will terminate the conversation quickly with an assurance to the caller that he has truly contributed something to the program.

Some callers attempt to monopolize the entire time they are on the air and when the host or guest tries to participate, they continually interrupt. Carlton Fredericks is a real professional when it comes to these bothersome callers. Trying to explain a complex nutritional formula, a lady caller kept breaking in until Fredericks, hardly stopping for a breath, said, "Please madam, don't interrupt me. I'm so fascinated with what I'm saying, I can hardly wait to see how it comes out." And he kept right on going without further problem.

At a time of great public grief or shock I have found it best to get out of the way and let as many callers as possible express themselves. The assassination of President Kennedy, the Saturday Night Massacre of Watergate, the night President Nixon resigned, the death of Elvis Presley, are all examples of those moments when public anguish is best served by providing an uninterrupted forum. A tidal wave of

calls come flooding in and provide confirmation that the callers and listeners are not alone in their feelings and concerns.

Psychologist Garry Shirts points out that "Television primarily presents historical news. Almost everything is taped, edited, and predigested before it ever sees the dark of the living room. News on two-way radio has much more 'nowness' about it. The communicaster frequently calls the person involved in the news. Also the citizens themselves give the news dimension. If a newscast is made, and somebody doesn't understand a part, they will call and ask about it." Thus the callers do provide an important service in opening up the news of the day to fuller examination and discussion.

Former White House speech writer and columnist Patrick Buchanan, writing in *TV Guide*, points out that callers provide instant communication with what "the community is thinking, saying, and feeling." Based on available studies, it may not necessarily reflect how the community would vote on an issue, but it certainly opens avenues of public expression different from those the major news media are presenting.

ABC television newsman Ted Koppel, speaking before the Radio and Television News Directors Association in 1977, accused most of the assembled throng of rising to "the dizzying heights of mediocrity" in their reporting to the public. He wondered whether they were not confusing journalism and entertainment. Perhaps here is a major service of the callers to talk shows and the community. Not even the host can read everything, but a diversity of callers can and do. They provide that mix of information and points of view that most reporters have no time to deal with.

As with any audience, moods change. On most holidays it becomes difficult to get people to phone in. Who wants to argue on Christmas Eve? With a full belly after Thanksgiv-

ing dinner, who wants to even talk? (Though I remember one lady who cried that while we were all full, she was starving in her little room. That tied up the phones long enough to get her a basket of goodies.) One New Year's Eve I solved the problem by advocating that drunks *should* drive, in opposition to all the admonitions they shouldn't. I suggested this would leave all the drinkers on the highways and they could kill each other off. It seemed like a means of not only getting calls, but driving home the point about not drinking and driving. Thousands called on that one. I now solve the problem by reviewing psychic predications made for the year just past, as described in Chapter 8. Ed Busch of WFAA says his worst time is against the Super Bowl. He solved the problem by asking trivia questions that anyone could call about.

But, in the main, most talk shows have quite the reverse problem. With a handful of lines, how do you accommodate the thousands trying to get through? The answer is you don't. Most of us try to balance the calls we do take to present as balanced a program for the listeners as possible. This frequently gives rise to charges of bias, but we stand by what goes over the air.

The charge of bias brings up a subject often misunderstood by nonprofessionals. All responsible broadcasters who expect to keep their licenses make every effort to be fair. The public has much confusion between the equal time requirements of the FCC and the Fairness Doctrine. Stripping them down to their utmost simplicity, declared candidates for public office and speakers representing issues that will be placed on the ballot operate under the equal time provisions: This means exactly *equal* time for opposing sides to speak. Everyone else operates under the Fairness Doctrine, which basically says every point of view on controversial issues of public importance to the community must be represented *even though unequal amounts of time may be provided*. It

leaves up to the broadcaster what is an issue of major importance. Thus a person who lays claim to the equal time of fairness provisions because he disagrees with the extra-terrestrial theories of Erich von Daniken, for instance, has no real grounds.

A letter of complaint to a sponsor may be passed on to the management of a station, or the station itself may receive some. These are never taken lightly; on the other hand, responsible management does not panic over a few nasty notes. Communicasters are schooled in libel and recognize their responsibility to be fair. As any retailer will tell you, the public is difficult to deal with. The callers and the listeners are part of that public. No one is going to satisfy everyone and, in fact, if they do on a talk show, they are probably not doing a good job.

Professionals such as Biggie Nevins, Operations Manager of my station KFI in Los Angeles, hire talent that can be trusted and leave them alone. There are always exceptions that may need attention, but in the main an irate listener is not going to change the course of programming.

While there is not a great body of scientific research concerning *callers* (as opposed to listeners), the information that does exist indicates callers are less affluent, many are handicapped, and they are frequently lonely. Before reporting on this body of caller research, it should be pointed out that this does not necessarily reflect a profile of *listeners*. I have had scores of letters from doctors, lawyers, college professors, business executives, bankers, and other upper strata citizens who feel it unprofitable for them to call and wait their turn. Personally I believe they also fear recognition by colleagues in case the host betters them in an argument.

Callers to Philadelphia station WCAU were studied in 1973 by Professor Joseph Turow of Purdue University ("Talk Show Radio as Interpersonal Communication," *Jour-*

nal of Broadcasting, Spring, 1974). Turow questioned callers directly over a period of days and found that most callers dial out of a need for interpersonal contact rather than being interested in some type of social reform. In plain language, they are lonely and want to talk to someone even if it is only the screener. "Several people remarked that they did not care about being heard over the radio; it was enough to talk to the talk jockey."

Additional data by Turow indicates that WCAU's callers were not in the higher socioeconomic brackets, did not belong to organizations and, if minorities call, they are of a higher socioeconomic status than the majority of their group. Callers are not completely alienated from society since they choose to be heard through an "establishment" channel.

Most callers believe they have something to add to the issue-oriented program; they believe they will inject a new element into the discussion, or set the facts straight, according to Turow's paper. Yet quoting directly, "A dramatically *small* number of people said they like to speak because they can try to get others to act on certain issues."

A more recent 1977 study underwritten by the University of Utah Research Fund (*Patterns of Communication on Talk Radio* by Robert K. Avery, Donald G. Ellis, and Thomas W. Glover) finds that most people who call talk radio shows are not argumentative, they just want to talk to someone who will agree with them. The Utah study concentrated on one Salt Lake City station, KSXX, with six hosts each having differing basic viewpoints and approaches.

Dan Griffen, program director of WOR in New York, disagrees. His analysis of his station's callers is that many call to disagree: "The spoken word is badly battered in the minds of the audience. They hear what they want to hear or argue about." This may be a direct result of his observation that "People in New York live very close to the surface. They

live defensively. They are normally more argumentative." Surely anyone who has visited New York from other parts of the country in recent years would accept that New Yorkers live more volubly and argumentatively.

On the Hilly Rose Open Phone Forum I have long noted the overwhelming preponderance of callers who agree with my point of view. I have told my screeners they must move up callers with an opposing point of view to balance the program content for the listeners. This is not always possible when every single line is busy with callers who all agree.

In studying KSXX, Professor Robert Avery points out further that callers call those who will stroke them. Liberals call liberals and conservatives call conservatives. The host and the callers seem to support one another. Avery also suggests, "People consider talk radio an information source and an outlet for their need to express themselves. The host at the other end of a telephone satisfies a variety of interpersonal functions for the caller. He serves not only as a source of information, but as a responsive human being who can confirm or disconfirm a caller's self-concept. Many callers report anger or rejection when they are mistreated by a host."

The paper continues, "Talk radio is more than a mere outlet for opinions. It is a medium for interpersonal communication. The results of our demographic study indicated that 72% of those people interviewed listened to talk radio every day. Many listeners are retired and living on moderate to low incomes. Very simply, these people use two-way radio as a window on the world. Many callers report that they listen to two-way radio to acquire information about important political and social events. Others claim that talk radio affords them the opportunity to make their opinions public. Talk radio must continue to receive serious scholarly attention. Any medium which occupies so much of someone's interaction time cannot be treated lightly."

There is a surprising lack of scholarly or professional information about the *listeners* available to the public. Clearly the listeners are studied minutely by audience appeal research organizations such as those headed by Frank Magid of Marion, Iowa, or Willis Duff of ERA (Entertainment Response Analysis) in San Francisco, but the information is closely guarded by the radio station paying the bill. What we do learn from the rating services such as ARB, however, is that, in the majority of cases, talk radio provides big numbers. It also tends to provide a demographic profile of somewhat older Americans.

Painfully aware that many advertisers will only buy spots on programs that appeal to the 18 to 49 age group, talk programmers are beginning to specialize with sports talk shows, entertainment-oriented talk shows, restaurant or cooking talk shows, youth culture talk shows, etc. The rating services are also taking note of the problems by providing a new age category of 25 to 54, feeling this group has more in common than the 18 to 49 age group. The young generally don't listen to talk programming until they pair up and start to pay taxes and are themselves caught up in the day-to-day struggles. In any case, talk programmers across the nation are moving more strongly toward what is now generally accepted as the "Me"-oriented generation of the seventies. Happily the big bulge of youngsters are growing into a big bulge of adults beginning to listen to talk radio.

Listeners related strongly to political issues during the Vietnam and Watergate years. As KABC's General Manager Ben Hoberman sees it, "Vietnam became boring, dull, and repetitive. That is why we have moved to a magazine concept of shows appealing to a variety of interests."

The big rating winner in New York City, WOR, agrees with this philosophy. Dan Griffen suggests, "As young people become homeowners and parents, they become interested in things that bored them before. WOR tries to provide

positive information such as where the best buys are or ways of repairing what you have to save money." Service-oriented programming is the name of the game for WOR's talk shows from the long-running morning John Gambling program through Carlton Fredericks, Arlene Francis, and many others who, in the main, talk *at* the listeners rather than *with* them directly. Only at midday and midnight does the programming shift to heavy listener participation via phones.

Griffen sees WOR's listeners this way. "New York is not Manhattan alone. It is all the boroughs plus part of New Jersey, Connecticut, Long Island, and other outlying areas. These people get up in the morning and are first assured by air personality Gambling, who has been there seemingly forever, that the world is still there. The listeners prepare to go to work knowing they will be late. They don't know *why* they will be late, just that they will be late. Gambling will tell them about train breakdowns, weather conditions, road conditions, and a myriad of problems that they will have to circumvent. All day these same people worry about getting home knowing that something will probably interfere with what should be a routine maneuver. WOR will be there as a supportive and coalescing force."

Not too far away in listener philosophy is station WMCA—smaller powered, but much scrappier. Led by highly competent and savvy Dennis Israel, this station in New York City relies on the telephones all day. Israel believes the people want a voice and he is prepared to give it to them 24 hours a day. He says, "During the 1977 electrical blackout, WMCA was here reassuring people by letting them know what their neighbors were thinking."

Israel is also aware of the need for younger listeners and last year hired thirtyish Alex Bennett, who is now heard weekends. In addition, he promoted heavily the "Call for Action" consumer-oriented feature at WMCA.

This same community involvement approach is used at

KABC in Los Angeles, who claim their station to be the first to have an ombudsman service. They have had 35,000 to 50,000 requests for help from listeners. The ombudsman staff reports 80% success in settling listener problems and returns \$250,000 to those listeners each year. Their philosophy is to make each listener believe that he is *someone*, and that KABC cares. This helps to establish the credibility that management wants its station to project to the entire community.

These stations are prototypical of almost all talk stations in America. In attempting to analyze who listens, it is necessary to understand what service is being provided. Without access to the private research that reveals listeners' behavior patterns, loyalties, attitudes, and opinions, one can deduce the nature of the audience by how the stations themselves approach the audience.

KIEV in Glendale, California, is part of the fragmented, highly competitive, lucrative Los Angeles radio market. This small station, with practically no recognition from the community or the rating services, had been programming country music for 13 years. A number of challengers moved into the country music field and depressed their position in the market even further. Most advertisers then turned their backs on buying time indicating they were not interested in buying Glendale radio; this despite the fact that KIEV is a 5,000-watt, clear-channel, daytime signal heard from Santa Barbara to San Diego.

Owned and operated by William Beaton and his two sons, KIEV was not plagued by the problem faced by many stations—absentee management making decisions for them, often from thousands of miles away. In 1975 they decided they needed to develop a loyal audience fast if they were going to compete in the marketplace. They cast covetous eyes at the number-one ratings of KABC. This 5,000-watt station in town had walloped its competition with talk.

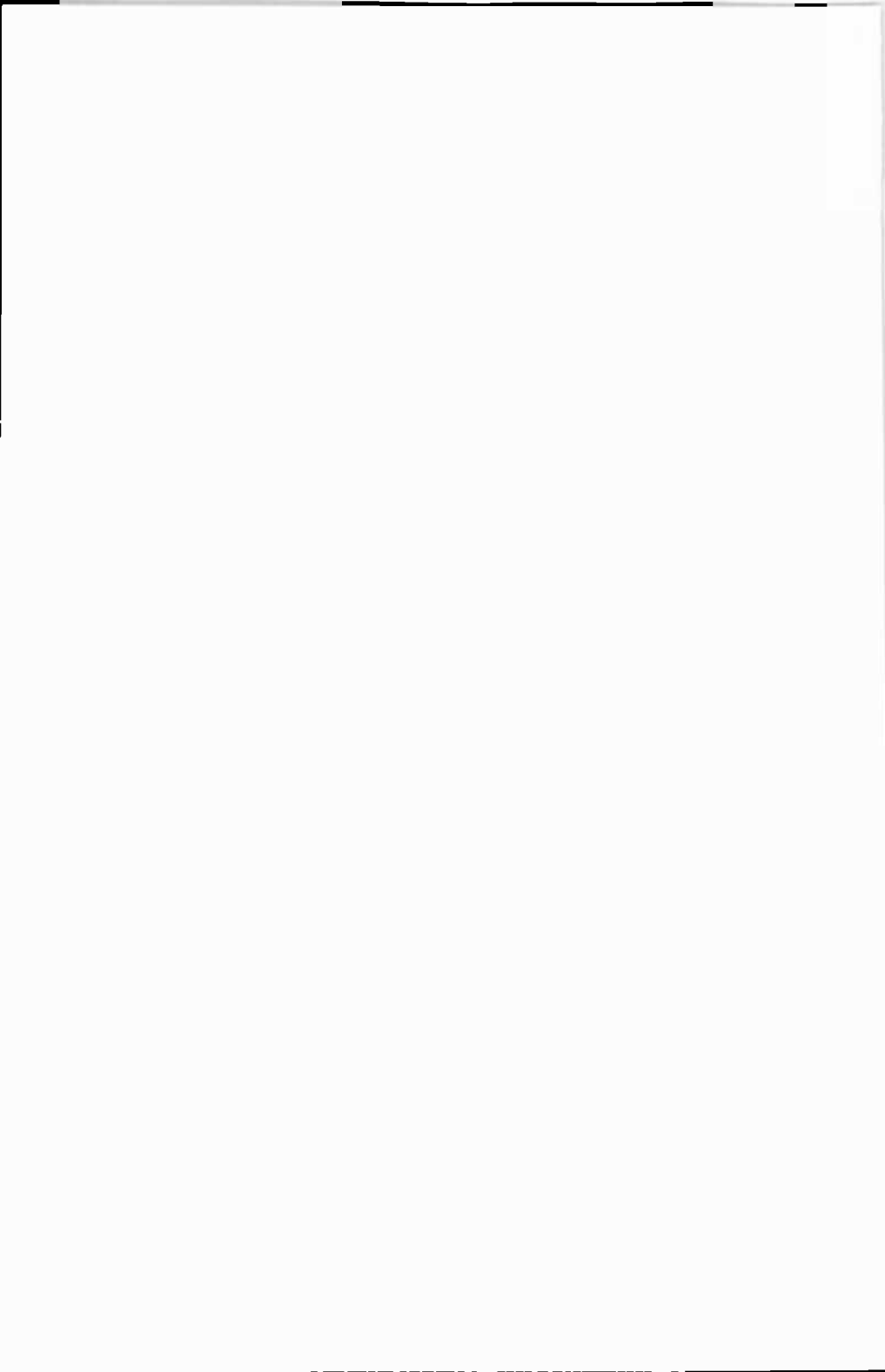
KIEV figured anywhere was up for them, so they hired Mr. Blackwell (fashion designer and creator of America's "Worst Dressed List"), who had been dropped by KABC because he appealed to older listeners. Long-time TV newsman George Putnam was next (Ted Knight patterned his character Ted Baxter on the "Mary Tyler Moore Show" after Putnam) with a news oriented talk show. Neither program was calculated to attract younger listeners, but those listeners KABC was sloughing off in an attempt to get younger demographics could make up a sizable starting audience for KIEV. Then they added a consumer show and created a restaurant discussion show to fill the late afternoon time slot.

KIEV built a downtown Los Angeles studio for the telephone-talk shows in a large, modern office building/shopping complex where visitors could watch the shows in progress. They promoted their personalities heavily with newspaper ads, posters, and bus ads. Within a year they had developed the loyal audience they were looking for. The community is aware of the station as a force and major sponsors are coming onto the client list. The *Los Angeles Times*, who before didn't deem them important enough to list in the radio column, now prints their guest list daily.

While ratings are not especially impressive, they are at least showing respectability against KABC, which is 15 years ahead of them in establishing this format. The heavily increased costs of talent, phone bills, and promotion are justified by the increase in income. They are also providing a service for many thousands of Los Angeles listeners who were being ignored by the stations who program based on ratings and demographics. KIEV ignores the ratings and just enjoys a leisurely stroll to the bank with mounting profits. They have an application with the FCC to extend their broadcast day to 24 hours. If that is approved, the Beatons feel Glendale will compete with the big boys in Southern California.

Other smaller stations in large markets, where it is almost impossible to stand out from the crowd, are beginning to recognize that talk stations cause awareness on the part of the listeners. WAIT in Chicago switched to talk in 1977. With the increasing competition from FM, UHF, VHF, cable, home video recorders, gossip-type magazines, and more, all vying for the attention of the listeners, AM radio competes best numerically in many markets where talk is programmed.

Psychologist Shirts claims, "Two-way radio is the harbinger of electronic communities in which people will be mechanically connected to devices allowing them to hear, talk to, see, and feel anyone in the electronic field. A new community is created by the air waves, radios, and telephones. I suspect there are already millions of permanent residents."



5

Celebrities Who Have Known Me

Celebrities are part and parcel of the life of a talk show host. They write books, they plug their movies, and they have charities or political causes to push. Most celebrities are unavailable to radio talk shows otherwise. When they are promoting something, you are their instant friend.

"Come on my yacht!" . . . "Fly to Vegas in my private plane!" . . . "We're having a little get together at the beach house" (for 750 intimates). I've heard and seen them all.

Marlo Thomas sent me a lovely note thanking me for the privilege of being on my show. I sent her a note back and the relationship seemed to come to an end. Horace Heidt, the old-time big band leader, decided to launch his son's career with a bash at their little pad in Malibu. Horace slept through most of the party. Monty Hall insisted he would call soon to have me help with charitable causes. I'm still waiting.

Some celebrities are a delight under any circumstances. Steve Allen is always willing to fill an hour or so. He usually has got a new book, a recording, or something to plug, but he never gets commercial and is willing to go along with

most anything. One evening we were involved in a serious discussion and his wife Jayne Meadows called in on the air to remind Steve to pick up a quart of milk on the way home. Another time I thought it would be fun to put Steve Allen and Jack Carter together. Steve showed up on time but we had to stall for an hour and a half waiting for Jack. Jack never even phoned regrets. Scratch Jack Carter from the guest list. Promote Steve to "anything he wants."

Some press parties turn out to be fun. During the height of the *Exorcist* mania, Warners threw a very small party (under 30 people) at Chasen's to meet the stars, director, and author. Everyone surrounded Linda Blair, leaving Max Von Sydow somewhat on his own—a golden opportunity my wife and I did not miss. He was charming.

Shirley Temple Black used to be our ambassador to Ghana and later U.S. protocol chief. She makes her permanent home near San Francisco. I met her at a party and she told me she was a regular listener to my program. We were in touch from time to time after that.

On a trip to Czechoslovakia, Shirley woke up one morning to find the Russians had invaded the country. This made national news as she found her way back to the free world. As soon as she got home I called her and asked for an interview for the show. She said she was giving no local interviews. I played on our slight friendship and the many hours she had listened to the show. Finally she relented and said she'd do it from home by phone with the proviso that I not tell anyone. (How to keep a radio interview secret was not an issue I chose to discuss with her.)

The big moment arrived and I did a fantastic introduction playing up the fact that this was the only local interview Shirley had allowed. I painted the picture of a cold bleak morning as the Russian tanks rumbled menacingly onto the

cobblestones of Prague, snuffing out the flicker of freedom under the now fallen Dubcek government.

"Shirley, what is your clearest memory of that morning?"

"Well," replied the world-famous voice, "they had the most fantastic little pastries"

What followed was a two-minute description of the baked goodies as I turned off my microphone and guffawed uncontrollably.

Lucille Ball was another person reluctant to be interviewed. A gossip columnist mentioned that she was coming to San Francisco for the weekend. I wanted her for the show but was told by her staff, "No way." She was on a holiday and didn't want to be interrupted. I left the door open, and said I would be at the station all day. Anytime she wanted to come by, we could tape it.

It was a warm beautiful Saturday afternoon and I figured there was no possibility she would give up such a glorious day and busied myself with routine work at the studio.

As serendipity would have it, Lucy chose to lunch at Julius Castle which sits high on a cliff and commands a sweeping view of the San Francisco Bay. It is a breathtaking vista—the kind that makes one introspective about life.

Lucy suddenly felt like talking. She asked her sister to call and see if I still wanted her. I did.

We sat before a microphone for over an hour. I picked up her mood and dug deeply into how she felt about herself as a person. The interview was a beauty. So good, that Lucy requested a copy for her own program and played it coast to coast.

It should be clear that when one meets so many celebrities it is no big thing. Some are likeable; some are not. Some are to be respected for their craft, others are not. I have no

preconceptions, I just meet and greet them as I would any other person.

I had never met Shirley MacLaine but she had been to Red China and had written a book, *You Can Get There from Here* (Norton). She was available and I booked her for the show.

The hour before air time I was busy in the newsroom reading 24 hours of AP and UPI wire copy. When my phone rang I knew it was urgent because the switchboard operator knows not to bother me unless it is. Shirley was on the line. She was rehearsing for the Academy Awards show, and needed to know exactly what time she was due on the air. I told her and she said she would be there.

Ten minutes later, the receptionist came to me in tears saying that Shirley's press agent was in the lobby screaming at her. She said no one had ever talked to her that way before and she did not want to take that kind of abuse. Annoyed over having to leave my work, I felt it was easier to get it settled and went to see the PR man.

He demanded to know what hallway Miss MacLaine would walk down and wanted to see exactly where she was going to sit. I couldn't believe the request. In 15 years of doing talk shows, no one had ever asked such a thing. I told him it was impossible to show him because the studio Shirley would use was now in use.

He threatened that if I didn't show him the way he would see to it that no Hollywood stars would ever do my show again. (He represented a major PR firm.) I don't threaten well and held my ground.

"But why is this necessary?" I persisted.

He rolled his eyes and said, "You don't know Shirley."

Wanting to get back to my preparation work, I said I'd show him the hallways and lead him to the door, but he couldn't go into the studio which was in use. He accepted, the receptionist dried her tears, and normalcy returned.

That is, until showtime. Five minutes before, no Shirley.

One minute before, no Shirley. Thirty seconds before air time Shirley burst through the door. We had no time to say more than hello, and we were into the interview; but it turned out to be a disaster.

We were on the air and before we began to talk she wanted fresh coffee which I arranged. Then I started right out with the title of her book, *You Can Get There from Here*. I noted that I had read the book and felt it meant she could find herself . . . only I thought she really hadn't done that yet.

She snapped back, "No, that's not what it means at all."

"Well, what does it mean?"

"It means you can get to Red China from here."

I began to burn. This was going to be a difficult interview because she was obviously not going to give me straight answers.

Then to top it off, she said, on the air, "Will someone turn that radio off. I can't go on until that radio is turned off."

In all fairness, I used to broadcast from a very old building and there was a bad leak from the tape delay system. But senators, governors, other movie stars, book authors, and hundreds of others had survived the low level sound leak. I explained this to her but she said it had to be turned down. The engineer threw up his hands in disgust.

I know when an interview is going downhill fast. This was a doozy. Admittedly I was upset and angry, but I told Shirley the interview was at an end because she and her people just weren't big enough to upset my staff and cause the commotion she had.

"What are you talking about?" she demanded.

I recounted the various things that had happened. She looked at her PR man helplessly, "And for that you want me to leave?"

I told her I sure did. She told me to get my head screwed on right and swept out the door.

Then the phone calls and letters began to come in from all

over the country. People with stories about how demanding and insensitive Shirley MacLaine is. I was shocked. I had had no idea. Frankly, I should have from the tenor of her book. She takes terrible swipes at Sheldon Leonard, Sir Lew Grade of England, and most of the women who went on the trip to China with her.

About this same time, three of the women called a news conference to tell the world that Shirley was rude and insensitive in China. According to a Navajo lady in the group, "She was a pain in the neck, and she was sweet but only when she wanted something." And a disillusioned lady sociologist from the University of Puerto Rico said, "Sometimes she unconsciously falls into the Hollywood style of living and dealing with people." The third lady said Shirley erupted in a barrage of rough language when the Chinese put the lights out in Peking at 10 P.M., as they normally do. She really thought they should turn the lights back on just for her.

It didn't all quite come together rationally based on her wondrous endorsement of the joys of Chinese communal living and selflessness as portrayed in the book.

By the way, the publisher corroborated that on other interviews Shirley had indeed said that the title *You Can Get There from Here* referred to her life, not the guard station on the Chinese border.

On the other hand, some people are much more down to earth than you would expect them to be. Years ago then Governor Pat Brown (father of the present governor of California) arrived to do the show and immediately sent an aide to call his mother to tell her to listen. Here was a man who, as governor, was heard and seen in the media almost daily, yet he called his mother whenever he appeared somewhere nearby.

A similar thing happened with former Governor Ronald

Reagan. He thought we would be on the air live. When he found out we were taping, he asked a press aide to call his wife Nancy so she wouldn't worry since he had told her he would be on the air at a specific time.

Speaking of Governor Reagan, I attended a party for the press and their families at his home in Sacramento. It was a backyard summer affair and in the mob scene that occurred, a little girl fell into his large swimming pool.

It was Ronald Reagan who jumped in fully clothed to save her. He emerged dripping wet, quickly went inside, and changed into dry clothing. Then he requested the press not to mention it. He was afraid it would come out looking like a publicity stunt. At this late date, I think I can break the embargo.

Speaking of politicians, my most unfavorable memory concerns George Wallace of Alabama early in the presidential campaign of 1968. It was a cold, bleak Thanksgiving afternoon, and there was George Wallace with his dying wife Lurline spending the holiday stumping for his candidacy. It is probably presumptuous of me to take it badly; it may even have been Lurline's dying wish that George continue as though nothing were happening. Yet, I felt he could have insisted on making her last Thanksgiving one with the family at home, instead of spending it in a radio station across the country.

And while politicians and politics are still on my mind, this is as good a time as any to mention that talk show hosts can get swept up in images projected by the media. Everyone tends to think a man who swindles money from an orphanage is a terrible human being, something along the lines of Simon Legree. In that same manner, certain Watergate characters would appear to have a personality much along the lines of their deeds.

I was not privy to any more Watergate information than the rest of the people, but I did tend to see John Dean in a

somewhat favorable light and John Ehrlichman more like evil incarnate. Both men were on the show peddling their respective books. Dean was not exactly a shock, but he was much cooler, quicker, and more detached than I had expected. I asked him about the portrait he painted in his book showing himself as a grasping, coveting, up-and-comer. He took a very slight pause and said, "How do you think it makes me feel knowing my mother has read the book?"

John Ehrlichman, on the other hand, brought his mother to the studio with him. She had been a longtime listener to the program and wanted to see the show for herself. Ehrlichman was perhaps one of the most affable men I'd ever interviewed. He seemed to be quite relaxed and very warm and outgoing. So much for preconceptions of people.

Rabbi Baruch Korff appeared on the show from time to time when he would visit former President Nixon in San Clemente after the resignation. He once mentioned to me that Mr. Nixon listened to my program. Eagerly I asked, "What does he think of my political analysis and ideas?" Korff responded, "He thinks you have a nice voice." That ended any thoughts I might have had about influencing the thinking at Casa Pacifica.

I was in San Francisco for nine years and I only moved twice. Both times something weird happened involving well-known people. Bing Crosby had moved to Hillsborough (not far from the Hearsts), south of San Francisco. He usually traveled all over the world so when he was in town, he wasn't eager to do interviews. I wanted to be the first to get him on a full-blown, hour-long interview.

The first problem was getting his unlisted phone number. That proved to be easier than I thought as a society matron I knew, who was trying to impress me, casually mentioned she had Crosby's phone number. I casually bet her it wasn't and



Hilly Rose with Ronald Reagan



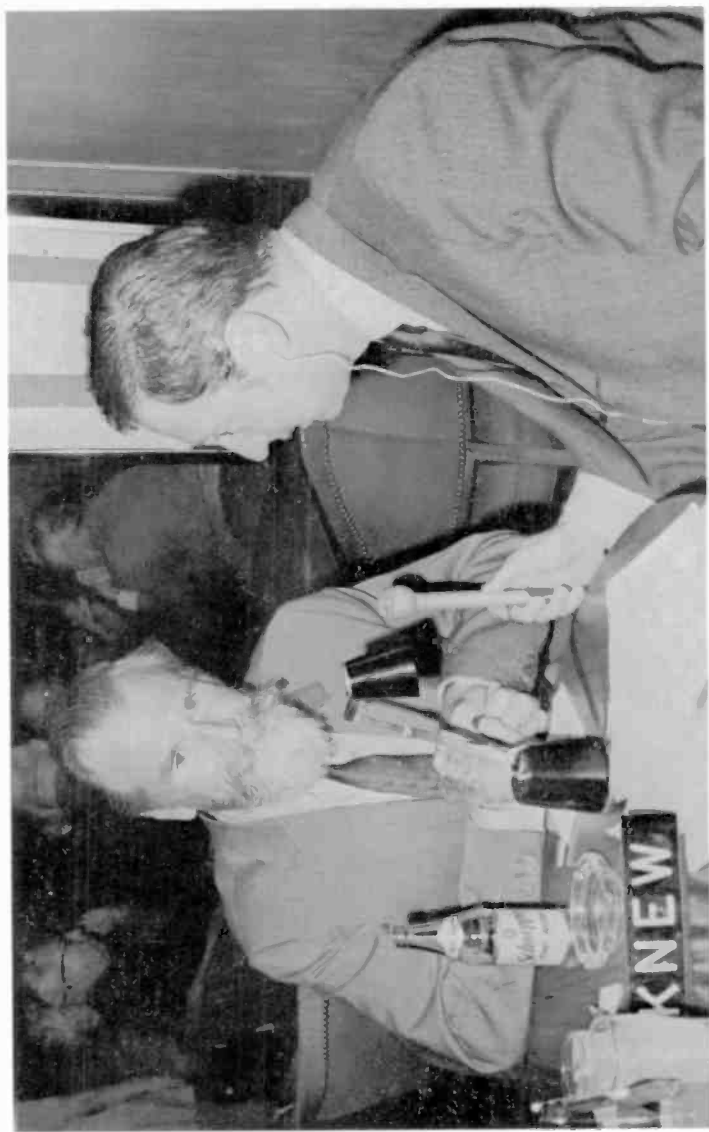
Hilly Rose with Los Angeles Mayor Tom Bradley



Hilly Rose with Dyan Cannon and Robert Culp



Hilly Rose with Ann-Margret



Hilly Rose with Commander Whitehead (of Schweppes)



Hilly Rose with Playboy bunny who won't let him get away from the phone



Carol Channing and Hilly Rose with two listeners who won a contest to attend opening night of *Hello, Dolly!* in San Francisco



Hilly Rose with Steve Allen



Saint Hilly Rose





IT HAPPENED FIFTY YEARS AGO!

And Hilly Rose does it again... In 1922 KFI Radio
 listeners heard wedding bells over the air waves. History
 repeats itself as love is *Rose-ier* the second time around
 when Hilly weds another happy couple at midnight,
 Saturday, December 2, in the KFI Theatre. You could be the lucky
 pair, so start throwing rice at your radio and listen for
 the contest details on TOTAL SPECTRUM RADIO.

THE HILLY ROSE SHOW 12 Mid-4:00 AM

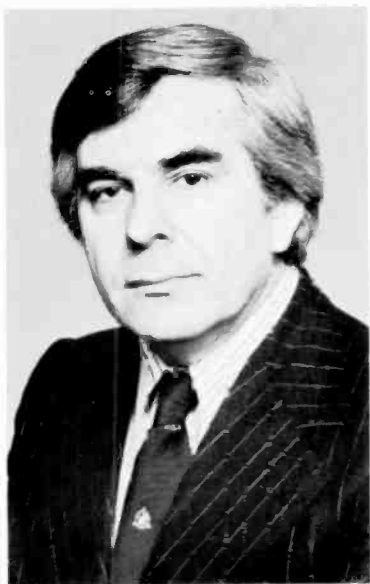
KFI 640.
 An affiliated station

CALIFORNIA'S MOST LISTENED-TO RADIO STATION

Ad for wedding contest



Howard Miller, WAIT,
Chicago



Jerry Williams, WMEX,
Boston



Ed Busch, WFAA, Dallas



Herb Jepko, KSL, Salt Lake City



Alan Courtney, WINZ, Miami



Barry Farber



Bob Grant, WOR, New York City

Michael Jackson, KABC, Los Angeles

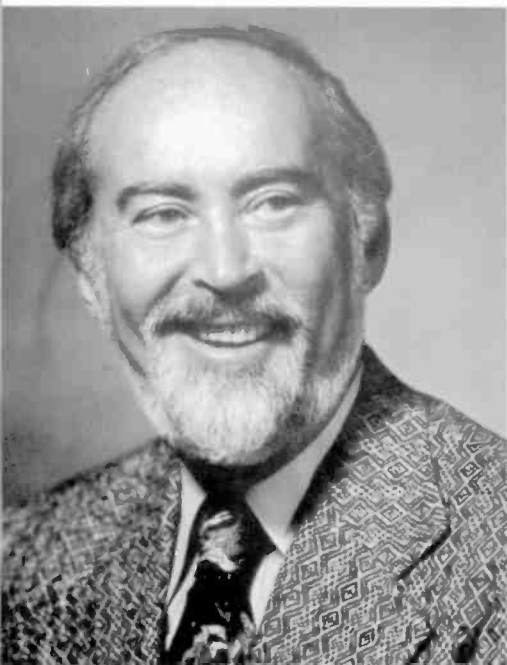
Ray Briem, KABC, Los Angeles



Barry Gray,
WMCA, New
York City



Larry Glick, WBZ, Boston



Paul Benzaquin, WBZ,
Boston





Sally Jessy Raphael, WMCA,
New York City



Jim Dunbar, KGO, San
Francisco

Long John Nebel and Candy Jones, WMCA, New York City



Letter from
Eldridge Cleaver

For Hilly Rose, of KNEW,
Whose radio talk show was
the first one of its type that
I appeared on. A lot has happened
since that time. I'm happy to say
that we look forward to continued
Progress and success, and I'm happy to
see that you are still here helping to
clarify the issues to the people. A lot power
to the people.

Eldridge

Owen Spann, KGO, San Francisco Wally Phillips, WGN, Chicago



for the price of five dollars, I was talking to Bing's veddy British butler.

I got through to Bing who said he rarely came into the city, but would keep my number if he ever had a few spare moments. I figured it was the nicest brush-off I'd ever had.

About two months later, I found a beautiful apartment above Ghirardelli Square with picture windows overlooking the Bay. I took a day off and the moving men left me in the middle of a huge mess. The telephone was to be installed the next day. I had on my old work clothes and was sweating profusely, pushing, pulling, and tugging to get everything in place.

The doorbell rang. I wondered who my first caller would be. It was a taxi. I hadn't ordered a taxi. He went away shaking his head. Fifteen minutes later another taxi arrived. Ten minutes later two more taxis arrived. By then I knew someone was trying to tell me something. I told the last taxi to wait, ran to a corner phone booth and called the studio. Seems that Bing had phoned to say he'd be there in an hour so I could tape him.

I ran into the station lobby with my work clothes still on to find Bing and Kathy Crosby standing against a wall. I had no idea how long, and I didn't want to ask. I rushed them into a studio and we started to chat. They turned out to be super people.

I moved one other time while living in San Francisco. Again I was in work clothes, but this time there was a telephone. It rang about three in the afternoon. In addition to my radio work, I was doubling as movie and theatrical critic for Channel 7 in San Francisco. The station had just sold a half-hour special to Colgate of that night's opening of the San Francisco International Film Festival. Many stars would be there. "Could you get to the auditorium by 6:30 P.M. to emcee the special?" In this business you don't say no.

So there I was, paint on my clothes and body. My tuxedo was somewhere in the wardrobe crates, my toilet articles somewhere in the unmarked shipping cases. In retrospect, I looked like one of those old movies set on fast speed where everything is flying.

I got there, a bit breathless, but just in time to greet the likes of Jack Warner, Walt Disney, Phil Silvers, Zero Mostel and many more whose faces failed to jog my memory for names because I'd had no preparation time. To those whom I allowed to sail by the television cameras with a mere, "Hi," I now confess and apologize.

Oddball things seem to dog my career. One of the oddest involved impresario Sol Hurok who brought all those Russian dance groups to America. I had interviewed Hurok in many unusual places. It got to be a special thing every year that we would tape an interview in the most unlikely location. It all began one time when too many press people showed up in Hurok's hotel suite and we had to retire to the toilet where this majestic man sat upon the throne as we talked about culture. It was difficult to top, but I always tried.

One year San Francisco voted on a bond issue to refurbish their famous opera house. Hurok happened to be in town and fought very hard in support of the measure. The chief opponent was the richest old man in town, Lou Lurie, who felt the taxpayers shouldn't contribute to the rich man's pleasures.

The bond issue was turned down by the voters. As it happened, Hurok and Lurie had been friends for many years. Rumor had it that, for the sake of friendship, Lurie would start a private fund for the opera house with a large check. How much that check would be was a secret. A thousand? Ten thousand? Maybe even a hundred thousand? Lurie could afford it.

I didn't know Lurie at that time, but I felt this momentous occasion would be just right for my annual oddball interview with Hurok. I called Lurie's closest friend, famed criminal attorney Jake Ehrlich, and prevailed on him to get Lurie to the studio. (This was a major feat in itself because the interview conflicted with one of Lurie's regularly scheduled luncheons at the venerable Jack's Restaurant with members of the San Francisco power structure.) Somehow Jake did it.

I had tipped off all the news media and my studio was jammed with every TV camera and newspaper reporter in town. This was going to be the end of a friendly feud and the beginning of a big fund to rebuild the opera house.

Hurok arrived first and was already at the table being interviewed when Lurie walked in. I was at my convivial best for this occasion. My first question to Lurie was a bit coy; something like, "It is rumored you will give Mr. Hurok a nice check today."

To this day I really don't know what caused Lurie to do what he did, and both men are now dead, so we will probably never know, but Lurie suddenly whipped out a check and ripped it up. He began to thunder at Hurok that he wouldn't give him a penny. He said he had had Hurok investigated and Hurok had never produced a thing in his life; that Hurok only took credit for the creative efforts of others. On and on it went with Hurok and the rest of us thunderstruck.

The TV cameras ground on, the newspaper photographers snapped away, and I not only created a scoop for myself, I made the front pages of the morning paper. I heard later that Hurok and Lurie had made up, but whenever I mentioned one's name in front of the other, it didn't seem to me that the friendship had endured.

Marlene Dietrich has been around a long time. She has been interviewed by reporters in every city of the world over

and over again. She is plain bored by the thing. Yet, when she comes to town for a performance the public relations people have to do something to create some press for her.

She was only willing to give interviews at the airport when she arrived in San Francisco a few years ago. For my purposes, a press conference interview is not adequate and I told her people that. They really wanted me to do something with her, so I suggested that I ride in the limousine from the airport to the hotel with her. The PR people weren't sure if she'd go for it, but said it was worth a try and they would ask her when she arrived.

Miss Dietrich got off the plane and there were perhaps 40 reporters and photographers waiting. She went directly to the microphone and said quite belligerently, "What do you want to know?" No one responded.

Then she said, "Doesn't anyone have a question? Isn't there one real reporter amongst you? Haven't you anything enterprising to ask?"

One female reporter from a small newspaper volunteered, "How many suitcases did you bring with you?"

Marlene turned purple and replied, "I can't believe the world press is so filled with idiots." She stormed to the waiting limousine leaving all the reporters with no interview and no reasonable quotes.

I was one step ahead of Miss Dietrich and jumped into the limo from one side as she got in on the other, commanding the driver to take off. He did and raced down the freeway at 65 miles an hour.

Dietrich turned to me and said, "Who are you?" I told her that the interview had been set up by her press people. She then raged on about the incompetent press and I got a terrific interview. Everyone else in town was saying that Dietrich wouldn't talk, while I was replaying a most exciting encounter with Dietrich.

The next time she came to town I was involved in another

project and couldn't meet her, but I was told that she thundered and ranted, wanting Hilly Rose to come to her hotel suite and interview her NOW! I'm sorry I missed that one.

The most difficult interview to get was with the Beatles when they arrived in August of 1964 to do their first tour in America. They landed in San Francisco and the CBS network wanted some tape for their newscasts. I was assigned to the news conference they held, but it did not suit our purpose because the four were full of nonsequential one liners. I was determined to get a private interview.

I called their tour manager and explained what I wanted. He said everyone in the world wanted the same thing. I told him I was different and he said just a minute and put the phone down on a table. I waited, and waited, and waited some more. He was purposefully making me hang on so I'd get tired and go away. An hour and a half later I was still hanging on when his voice came on the line saying, "Hullo?"

I said, "This is Hilly Rose, and I still want that interview."

He said, "Listen friend, anyone who would hang on the line for an hour and a half deserves an interview. Come over to the hotel and I'll see what I can do."

I grabbed a tape recorder and ran all the way. The Hilton was surrounded with insane preteens. When they saw me with a tape recorder they demanded to know if I was going to see *them*. They offered me anything if I'd take them with me. To protect myself I said no, I was going to interview someone else and wished I *could* interview the Beatles. They immediately dropped me.

I went to their manager's suite and he called the boys, who were in another room. I heard him pleading and cajoling with them, saying it was important. Finally, I got the go ahead. But I really wasn't prepared for what I found.

The Beatles were all in their underwear. The two-room

suite was an absolute pig sty. For whatever reason (maybe jet lag, since they had just flown in and stayed up all night to compensate), they were crusty and feisty.

John refused to talk and actually kept flushing the toilet during the entire eight-minute interview to ruin whatever I was getting. What he didn't know is that I had special equipment that blocked out extraneous noise and only gave me the person I was talking to.

Paul and George did most of the talking, responding to what was cooked up by me as the "important reason" for giving the interview. I said that, as a matter of safety, they had to warn all the kids to be quiet and sit in their seats so as not to hurt people at the concerts. They only half-bought the idea, but they went along with it. We talked a little about their music, and I was back in the hallway.

I did manage to get their autographs for my children, but their friends refused to believe it was actually the Beatles' handwriting and so the autographs were absolutely worthless.

I got the interview, however, and garnered an entire new teenage audience that had never listened to me before.

The interview I was most nervous about was with Ann Rutherford. She was Andy Hardy's girl friend in the movie series of the same name and I grew up idolizing her. You know how kids can feel about a special celebrity. In my business you eventually meet everyone, and finally Ann Rutherford was booked on the show. What would I say to her? Would I give away my nervousness? Would she be just like I remembered her from the movies of the thirties?

I walked into the lobby of KFI in Los Angeles and a very nice-looking middle-aged lady stood up to greet me. "Hi Hilly, I'm Ann Rutherford. I've been a fan of yours for years. You know, you keep me company every night when

I'm washing dishes out at the beach house. Funny, you don't look like I pictured you."

That really cracked me up. I wasn't nervous anymore. This wasn't the little girl I remembered, but frankly, I'm not a little boy anymore, either.

There are so many more celebrities I have met over the years. Jack Benny didn't want to give me an interview because I was then with CBS and he felt they had shafted him. He finally did the interview though, because he was a sensitive man and knew it was important to me. Garson Kanin found out it was my birthday and came to the interview with a silk tie as a present.

For a while, I broadcast from the Top of the Mark (Hopkins Hotel). The hotel picked up the bar bill, and you'd be surprised how many big-time celebrities wanted to do my show just so they could drink free. Then, there was the actress wife of a congressman who, in the darkened broadcast area, felt free to play kneesies and a few other things under the table while I was trying to conduct a reasonably sane interview. Jane Fonda and Michael Sarrazin came to the Top of the Mark immediately after sneak previewing *They Shoot Horses, Don't They?* The maitre d' put them right next to me thinking they had come to be on my program. They were in no mood for any kind of interview, especially after I walked to their table with my roving microphone and said, "Now here's Jane Fonda and *Peter Fonda*." I didn't get word one from Jane or *Michael*. And I remember dear old Commander Whitehead who wouldn't do the interview until he was served a bottle of Schweppes. Zsa Zsa Gabor is probably the easiest interview of all. She talks nonstop and I could practically have the evening off whenever she came on.

Another big talker is "Baretta" himself, Robert Blake. He

doesn't go on and on like Zsa Zsa, but he is totally unpredictable, which makes him a great interview. His colorful words and absolutely no-nonsense presentation of himself come right through to the listeners.

About a year ago, Blake testified before a congressional committee on drug abuse. He wanted to warn young people about the dangers—dangers that he himself had been through. The word got out that he was dead set against anyone taking dope and some of the young people were not too happy with him. He wanted a forum to clarify his position, so we set up an interview.

At air time there was no Robert Blake. I went on with my first guest. About a half hour into the program there was a constant buzzing on the intercom system signaling someone was at the front door. The screener went down to find an officer of the Los Angeles Police Department with a message from Robert Blake. He had tried to get us on the phone, but the switchboard shuts down at 5:30.

We called and found Blake had fallen off his bike and was flat on his back in bed. With all the promotion we had done for his appearance, we prevailed on him to do the interview by phone. Since he was even more relaxed in his own bed, it was a wild interview. Readily, Blake put down pill poppers by saying, "Don't bullshit me, I've tried it all." I'd give a lot to have an up-front guest like Blake every night. And next time he is on my program, I'm going to ask him how he got the LAPD to run his messages. Did he pick up the phone and say, "Officer Baretta here, would you do me a little favor?"

Rona Barrett became a celebrity by reporting on celebrities. During the promotion of her book, she was interviewed by Ed Busch of WFAA in Dallas. The interview, scheduled for an hour, went well, but Rona had remained fairly cool, so Ed asked her to stay another hour. She agreed and he

excused himself during the news to go to the men's room. Rona stayed not only for one more hour, but two. She also became much warmer as the interview progressed. At the end, Ed stood up to say good-bye and realized that his pants zipper had been open for the past two hours. Rona smiled warmly and left. Ed feels the course of his zipper had changed the course of the interview.

Seeing Rona at a Hollywood party recently, I asked her about the Busch incident. "Miss Rona" became slightly indignant and said, "You may quote me that I never even noticed his zipper was open and if I had I certainly would have stayed much longer."

Celebrities are great fun and there is always an aura of excitement when they appear. This nation seems to have an insatiable interest in gossip and celebrity tidbits—and you can be sure you will hear them on many telephone-talk shows.



6

Investigative Reporting

Investigative reporting has been rediscovered since the popularity of Woodward and Bernstein (with a little help from Robert Redford). Journalism and broadcasting schools are filled with neophytes who believe they can topple governments and bring organized crime to bay. Consumerism continues on the rise since Nader discovered General Motors had no clothes. Both newspapers and broadcasters assign reporters to dig out the dirt.

Talk radio has been doing the very same thing for many years. People call these programs so they can air grievances, spread rumors they may have heard, or question practices they don't understand. As we will see later, unless the information appears in the newspaper, or is seen on the main television newscasts, it is not considered news. Yet, in my opinion, the single most valuable contribution a good talk show host can make to his audience is to follow up on the information needs of that audience.

People are confused by the world around them. Governmental agencies at all levels do a very poor job of telling people why things are done in a certain manner. Why are

policemen never at the right place at the right time? Why do buses run together in a clump when you have waited 15 minutes with none in sight? Why does your neighbor get better city services than you do? Why doesn't the supermarket in your neighborhood charge the same as the one where Aunt Tillie lives? Why? Why? Why? The questions which come up on talk shows are endless. Empty answers and platitudes are not only a disservice, but the audience soon tunes out. What the heck, they know as much as you do.

The telephone is without question the greatest investigative tool ever invented. Almost anything you want to know can be found out by telephone. In most investigative reporting your fingers can truly do the walking by dialing and talking. You would be amazed at how many people are listed in the phone book. You would also be amazed at how many people are not only willing to talk, but absolutely eager to tell every scrap or detail of an event if they think there is any possibility of their name getting on the air or in print. Investigative reporting is truly 98% dull, time-consuming work and 2% inspiration. It also requires listening to what people say, and sometimes to what they do not say. Many times what winds up as a few seconds of factual air information may have taken hours to track down. Yet there is satisfaction in knowing you have kept the faith with the listeners.

Most often leads come from the listeners themselves. The best example of this is one call I received on the air. The story was pursued, also on the air, and a California State Fair Award for Investigative Journalism resulted.

It started with an irate on-air call from a lady living in San Jose, California. She demanded to know why youngsters in the Job Corps were free to travel anywhere in the world twice a year at government expense. I said, "Surely you mean the Peace Corps, and they can only go where they're assigned."

The lady was indignant! "No, I mean the Job Corps. This young man stationed in Dayton, Ohio, travels around the world on the taxpayers money when he completes each six months of work, and so do many others. Not only that, after one year they can attend any college of their choice and graduate—all at no cost to them."

The normal thing to do with this kind of information is to put the lady on "hold," and phone an executive of the Job Corps to refute or confirm the story. As with all government agencies, you may get many dead ends until someone either has the information or is willing to speak officially. In this case, the story was so preposterous I decided I would track it down to its source.

"Lady, where are you getting this information. It sounds incredible."

"Why it's right here in today's *San Jose Mercury News*."

"Read it to me," I suggested, knowing that lots of folks misread and spread rumors as a result. She did, and it was exactly as she had said. I still couldn't believe it.

"Exactly where in the paper is that article?" It turned out to be an item by a local San Jose columnist. So we placed a call to the columnist. Yes, indeed, the information he printed was true. He had read it in the Gilroy paper. Gilroy is a small town about 70 miles south of San Francisco.

We called the Gilroy paper and talked with the editor. Surprisingly he hadn't seen the item, nor did he know anything about it. He said he would check it out and call us right back.

Ten minutes later the editor said he found the item in last Friday's paper. Every Friday he turned over one entire page to the journalism class at the high school. They prepared all the news stories for that page and he printed them, unedited and unverified.

We then checked with the principal of the Gilroy High School who tracked down the student who wrote the story. She came on the air and said the story certainly was true.

Why, her boyfriend (who was 17 or 18 years old) had written her all the details in a letter from Dayton where he was stationed in the Job Corps.

We got the name of her boyfriend and the exact place he was stationed. A call to Dayton didn't get us the young man in question, but it did get us the camp supervisor. Yes, he knew the young man. The teenager was somewhat of a troublemaker, nothing serious, just disruptive and imaginative, as youngsters that age will be. No, there was not a word of truth to the story. In fact, the young people had to serve a year before they were given leave to go home and there was no free schooling benefit. A letter written to impress a teenage girl had turned into fact when printed by the media.

It is a simple little story that says a great deal about the dissemination of information. Walter Winchell used to say, "Don't argue with me, I go to press too often." And even Walter Winchell did not always have his facts correct. We in the United States have such a voracious appetite for news and gossip that it is almost impossible to check all the details before a story is printed. The *San Jose Mercury News* is a large and excellent newspaper. Yet, under pressure of a deadline, a columnist accepted something as spurious as the Job Corps story at face value. A reader complained to a talk show, the talk show took the time (because we had it) to check it out completely. We won an award for bothering to investigate, which is something every reporter should do automatically.

Because of the Job Corps incident I decided to take an issue of the *San Francisco Chronicle* at random and check the truth of many of the stories, especially the feature stories. Of the 50 or so which were followed through to their sources, we discovered that 50% were substantially accurate, 30% substantially different enough from the truth to say the

reporter used a good deal of imagination, and 20% inaccurate enough to be labeled untruth.

Some months later I did the same thing with the *National Enquirer* and found easily 75% of the stories were, to say the least, imaginative, 20% were inaccurate enough to label untruth, and only 5% were substantially correct.

In both sets of statistics I am going back a number of years and one would hope they have both cleaned up their act. My information came from placing phone calls directly to the people involved in the incidents. The point is that when you're on the air, live, you don't have the option to misinterpret when the individual involved is telling the story in his own words. I have been successful in getting many reluctant celebrities on the show by simply offering them the opportunity to tell their story when they felt terribly misquoted by print media. So don't necessarily believe everything you read.

Have you heard about Saint Hilly? Well, don't laugh, because it is true. As of May 20, 1977, Hilly Rose has been named Saint of the Universal Life Church and I have the certificate to prove it (see photo insert)! My road to sainthood was not an especially difficult one. I did not walk through thorns, nor spend my life in the service of the Lord. A little on-air coverage over the years for Rev. Kirby J. Hensley and his church has raised me from Minister to Doctor of Divinity and, finally, to Saint. You, too, can have all the titles and respect I have, but, in your case, it will cost you hard cash.

The road to glory began for me with a tip from a listener that there was a strange man in Modesto, California, who was ordaining ministers wholesale across the country. All one had to do was send a request to Rev. Hensley and he would send you your minister's certification with no ques-

tions asked, and no charge. In fact, Hensley also paid the return postage of your certification. Many people were using these certificates attempting to avoid income tax, military service, and to receive clerical discounts on everything from airline tickets to motion picture tickets.

Here was a fantastic story that needed verification. Hensley came on the program quite willingly. He had incorporated his church in 1962 and by 1968 had ordained 13,263 ministers. This was his first big break in the media and he was terrific on radio. He was a down home, totally illiterate individual who could see through the gobbledygook of carefully drawn legislation and skillful lawyers. He loved to poke fun at them, as well as himself.

Kirby Hensley saw clearly the meaning of what had been read to him in the Constitution of the United States—the separation of church and state. A religious man who has completely memorized the Bible by having someone else read it to him, Hensley founded and incorporated his church. He then set about to make it the biggest church in the world. (It probably is if you just count ministers instead of parishioners.) There are no rules or regulations, and no specified types of service. The Universal Life Church is whatever you want it to be.

Rev. Hensley was so grateful to have the opportunity to break the story to a large audience, that he immediately sent me minister certificate 13,264. There are now well over six million of my brother and sister ministers in the church. Actually there are a few dog and cat ministers as well, since the church does not inquire as to one's ethnic, religious, or human background.

The numbers are smaller when it comes to those with Doctor of Divinity certificates. These cost \$20. (Even the traditional religionists refer to the D.D. classification with tongue in cheek as "Donated Dignity," since it is usually conferred on those who make large cash donations.) After 15

years, more than 20,000 people can claim this doctorate from the Universal Life Church.

After I broke the story, hundreds of radio, television, newspaper, and magazine stories ensued. Hensley sent me a D.D. certificate as thanks. In a way, I was one of the founding fathers of one of the world's largest churches. Over the years I have continued to follow this unusual story and in 1977 was made a saint. Ordinary mortals need to send \$5 to the good Rev. Hensley for sainthood. At this writing, there are less than 500 of us saints.

As the word got around concerning the wondrous discounts and tax possibilities of being a minister in the church, both the state of California and the federal government got interested. The state couldn't do much about the free ministerial certificates, but they claimed that selling the Doctor of Divinity was a violation of the Education Code since there was no educational requirement. The state moved to put Rev. Hensley out of business by filing suit. He solved that by moving his church headquarters to Arizona and continued to crank out certificates for a fee.

California was relentless. In 1969, Municipal Court Judge Edward Nelson sentenced Hensley to one year in jail and a \$625 fine. Since California said the Universal Life Church was not legitimate, the IRS moved in to void the religious tax exemption. It took some years, but Rev. Hensley and the church were vindicated fully and completely. The Ninth U.S. Court of Appeals ordered the Municipal Court to void the sentence and find Hensley innocent. Due to that ruling, the U.S. Attorney General himself said there was no way to press the IRS claim. As a result, the separation of church and state still stands!

The little old country boy has beat them all, and, as they say in show business, "You ain't seen nothin' yet!" Rev. Hensley and his staff are busy preparing a condensed version of the Bible for people who don't have much time to get to

the best parts. In 300 pages, you will have a compact version of the Old Testament, the New Testament, *and* a brand new testament being created for these modern times.

Right behind that endeavor will be your ability to receive an earned Ph.D. in religion. Based on your knowledge of the good Rev. Hensley's condensed Bible, your ability to pay \$100, and your ability to answer 70% of the questions asked on the test, you can *earn* your Ph.D. Once burned, Hensley learned his legal requirements well. Unfair of me I know, but I asked Rev. Hensley if there would be more than four questions. He seemed rather hurt when he assured me there would be 100 questions. Of course, the test will be taken in the privacy of your own home since not everyone can afford a trip to magnificent Modesto in Northern California.

This is an ongoing story. You probably read last year about the town in New England where more than half the good folks became Universal Life Church ministers to avoid paying their taxes. Let me assure you the church is real and the benefits are sometimes available, depending on local court decisions. Airlines, for example, caught on quickly and refused clergy discounts to members of the church. Yet, not all airline clerks are aware, and not all modes of transportation are so crass as to turn down a man of the cloth.

If you would like to join the many millions of Universal Life Church ministers who can legally marry couples and officiate at many types of ceremonies, simply send your request (a small donation would be appreciated) to Rev. Kirby J. Hensley, Universal Life Church, Inc., 601 Third Street, Modesto, California 95351. I assume all prices are subject to rise along with inflation, but I notice the D.D. price has remained constant throughout these difficult days.

I don't know where Rev. Hensley will go from here, but I suppose for a very large contribution (dare I say it) you might be an honorary deity.

Sometimes investigative reporting is just plain luck—being in the right place at the right time helps. A few years ago

Pope Paul visited the Philippine Islands. In spite of all the security at the airport, a berserk man tried to stab him soon after he left the papal plane. Late-breaking wire stories said an aide to the Pope had stopped the assailant before he could get to the Pope. Though we had three different wire services at the radio station, details were scanty. Many people called the program asking for more information. Well, why not pick up the phone and call the Philippines? My producer placed a call and asked for the biggest hotel in Manila. It seemed reasonable that someone of importance in the entourage would be staying there. The hotel switchboard operator was asked for someone high up in the papal party.

The phone rang three times and a rather breathless voice answered. Happily he spoke English and, even more happily, we had lucked into talking to the Cardinal who himself had deflected the knife of the crazed would-be assassin. The Cardinal described in detail what had happened from his very close vantage point. We fed that interview to the network.

Another time, after a particularly bloody rumble in Northern Ireland, we decided to call the Irish Republican Army to get their side of the story. Now I knew I couldn't get telephone information in Belfast to give me the IRA since they were illegal, so I called Dublin in the Republic of Ireland figuring the IRA had an office there. The operator in Dublin thought I was kidding when I asked for the IRA, but she said she would see what she could do and phone me back.

Fifteen minutes later she had a man on the line who sounded very Irish and very hesitant. I asked if he was a representative of the IRA. "Wellll . . . ," I heard him stammer, "ya know, the IRA is illegal here."

"What, in the Republic, too?"

"That's right."

I decided I'd better not push the issue, but proceeded to ask a great many questions about the IRA. The man in the

Republic seemed to know a tremendous amount about the history and activities of the IRA. I never asked his name so he wouldn't get in trouble. Regular news services took another couple of days acquiring all the details of the attack which he shared with us.

Michael Jackson at KABC in Los Angeles also uses the telephone creatively to get stories unavailable by traditional ways. During President Nixon's first trip to China, the entire Western world was fascinated by the opening of this "strange" land. Michael wanted to get a first-hand report for his audience and placed a regular phone call to Peking. He told the overseas operator he would talk to anyone in the president's party.

When all the connections were made, a very sleepy voice answered, "This is William Buckley." Indeed, it was the well-known TV personality and author. Jackson thought he had great luck in getting a professional journalist to describe the scene and he told Buckley he would like to tape an interview with him.

Buckley said, "Michael, it is three o'clock in the morning in Peking. Besides, I can't appear on your program because I'm contracted to CBS."

Michael thought about that for a second and said, "Sir, I accept that you can't appear on the program, but would you please do me a personal favor? Would you just look out the window and describe for me what you see in Peking at 3 A.M.?"

William F. Buckley literally rose to the occasion for a fellow broadcaster and did an exquisite word picture of the historic Chinese capital just for Michael. Those are some of the fringe benefits and pleasures of being an investigative reporter.

Sometimes subterfuge is used to get a story. I am not particularly proud of this aspect of my profession. There is a tremendous on-going controversy over the public's right to know. During one of the major college student clashes of the

1960s, I was on the air when the first bulletins came through. At a time like that, the call screener must place phone calls to try to get to the best source for the story. We tried for two hours and no one would talk because of the delicate nature of the breaking story. I ordered the screener to get the details any way possible (shades of *Front Page*). In about ten minutes, the president of the college was on the line telling my entire audience about the campus riot.

I was elated because no one up to that time had gotten the full story. I congratulated the screener off the air and asked him how he did it.

"Well, it was quite simple," he told me. "It was dinnertime and I gambled that the president would be home. I got his home phone from directory information, called, and told his wife you were a big contributor to the alumni fund. He came right to the phone."

I lost a little sleep that night tussling over the morality of such tactics. I did, after all, order the screener to get me someone at all costs. I'm not sure I would have had the guts to do what he did, but the public did find out what was actually happening at a very confusing moment.

By their very nature, talk shows are filled with opinion. Most hosts fall into the trap of knowing only what they read, putting themselves on the same level with almost the entire listening audience. Some try to travel as much as possible and spend their vacations poking around foreign countries. I said vacations because I have never heard of a talk show host who has been allowed to take company time to travel for a story. Yet, how sweet it is to put down a particularly arrogant and uninformed caller by saying, "Oh, when I was there just a few weeks ago, I saw with my own eyes that you, sir, are wrong."

Japan, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Thailand, Israel, Sweden, Norway, Finland, Denmark, U.S.S.R., Mexico, Tahiti, England, France, Holland, Germany, Italy, Greece, Yugoslavia, Panama, Switzerland, Barbados, and many other countries

have come under my scrutiny and all have survived. Israel isn't too sure about me, however. Twice I have been there when unexpected fighting has broken out. I was in the Sinai Desert in 1968, waiting to have dinner in Beersheba with General Asher Levy, when he arrived an hour late with many apologies. The apologies included a complete rundown of the sudden Egyptian attack across the Suez Canal, including the number of Israeli casualties. I excused myself and rushed for my room where I phoned my station and broke the story that had not yet crossed the wires. The second time was in February, 1974, when I was on the Golan Heights. There had been no fighting or shelling for many months. The area was closed, but I was a guest of the Israeli government as a newsman and I was allowed through the barriers into the Golan. I went all the way to the forward United Nations outpost and could see the tall buildings of Damascus, Syria, in the distance. We toured the entire Golan that day and, only as we began our dissent, did I hear the boom and thud as the Syrians began the first of daily shellings after a long period of inactivity. Perhaps the Israelis would rather I not visit their forward lines again.

In Amsterdam I inspected what any red-blooded American male would inspect—vice! Spending time with the head of the vice division, Inspector J. Peetsma, I uncovered the rather ingenious method the Dutch use to control the inroads organized crime has made in prostitution. They simply limit each pimp to one prostitute. If a woman has more than one pimp, or if a pimp is selling the services of more than one girl, he is arrested. It doesn't stop prostitution, but it takes away the high profit and much of the brutality.

In the Nordic countries it became apparent from talking to average citizens as well as government officials that democratic socialism is not the paradise commonly assumed. Taxes are very high and incentive is therefore dulled. In Stockholm, the Swedes can wait up to 20 years for a nice

apartment in certain parts of town. Socialized medicine certainly allows a higher standard of medical care for the people overall, but one can wait a year or more for a needed operation that is crippling him. Suicide and alcoholism rates are the highest in the world, but the government claims that is because they keep better records. During the 1976 election in Sweden, one of the minority parties was promising free sex for lonely older people as well as for those who lived in distant outposts from the cities. Now *that's* something you didn't see in the morning papers here!

We complain a great deal in America about our bureaucracy and the frustrations we endure in dealing with every level of our government. To those complainers I relate my experiences with Russian bureaucracy. They make us look like the streamlined, efficient, wonder of the civilized world.

Travel helps to keep one's perspective on America's strengths. It is quite easy on a talk show to fall into the trap of thinking America is no damn good. Very few people call to say what a great place we live in. Our attitude is very much like that of a brother and sister who are constantly at each other's throat until someone from the outside makes a disparaging remark about one or the other. They close ranks quickly. Talk show hosts should be required to travel around this country as well as overseas (at company expense, naturally!) in order to keep this perspective.

One of the most satisfying investigative efforts that I was involved in paid off in practically single-handedly stopping the drilling of 200 oil wells in San Francisco Bay. This occurred within a year after the great Santa Barbara oil spill when passions were running quite high. For reasons known only to the pundits of state government, plans were developed to drill the wells in this heavily populated area that contained some of the most beautiful scenery in the world.

Once again the tip came from a listener who wondered why the California State Lands Commission was going to

hold hearings on signing the leases in two tiny towns in Northern California. Benecia and Martinez are not exactly tip-of-the-tongue names, even to long-time residents of California. Many phone calls to Sacramento produced little information. In fact, most officials involved wouldn't answer my calls. The only explanation I could get was that meetings of the Commission are normally spread around the state.

It seemed to my suspicious mind that a better explanation was that the news media would be sure to cover this story in detail if the hearings were held in Los Angeles or San Francisco. This way there would be no protest from the public, the leases would be signed, and it would be too late to do anything about it. Day after day I kept plugging away on the program about the need for moving these hearings so they would be under the careful scrutiny of the major press and the people directly involved—the people who lived in the San Francisco Bay Area.

I could never prove it, but some of my inside governmental sources kept insisting that the contracts had already been signed and the hearings were only a formality in any case. Whatever the real truth, the hearings did get moved, the press at large did cover the story, and the contracts were never officially let. San Francisco Bay may be more polluted than in years gone by, but at least it is not polluted visually and the chances for a major disaster had been averted.

Publicity is a major weapon in many emotional arguments. In the '60s, nothing was more emotional than the great grape strike of Cesar Chavez and the United Farm Workers. Violence not only occurred in the fields, but in the cities as well. People took sides believing whole cloth whatever propaganda was put out by the growers or the UFW, depending on their own prejudices. Table grapes served at a party could cause some guests to walk out.

Delano was the heart of the table grape industry and the

headquarters of Chavez; thus, it was the hub for partisans of both sides. Even Robert Kennedy made it a prominent stop during his ill-fated California presidential campaign. As I continually read about the issues, it became apparent that most reporters and politicians who visited Delano seemed to visit one side or the other, but not both. This I decided to do.

In truth, neither side was playing it straight with the country. It is not my intent here to do a treatise on the treatment of farm workers in America; I can only report what I saw. I found Delano to be a clean, neat, and obviously lower-income community. This was a far cry from the terrible pictures we had been inundated with; pictures that showed run-down shacks with pathetic-looking children infested with sores. Many of the pickers spent their leisure time much like other lower-income Americans: They watched television, went to the beer parlor, and planned ways of sending their children to college. In fact, some had children in college.

I asked Chavez and his second in command, Larry Itliong, to show me the shacks and terrible working conditions. They waved it off, saying, "You are going to see the growers. Let them show you." When I asked the growers, they laughed it off. What they did show me was very adequate housing. At mealtime I saw well-prepared food that the workers seemed to relish, served in clean facilities.

Except for the workers in the UFW Community Hall at Delano, most of those in the fields told me they didn't care one way or the other about being unionized. They just wanted to be left alone to do their work without fear of violence or reprisal.

The growers tried to plead poverty. The grape strike was ruining them, they claimed. Many had come to the United States as immigrants and worked their way up to a point

where their fields were finally producing a fair return on their investment. It was difficult to sympathize with them completely after seeing the high standard of living they had as opposed to the workers. It was also difficult to sympathize since the larger fields were owned by major industrial corporations, not the hard-working immigrant families who got the publicity.

I found Cesar Chavez in the bedroom of his simple home in Delano. His back problem from his many fasts had him bedded, so he conducted his business from his home. He talked about the wages paid to the stoop laborers. He complained that Americans have looked the other way so they could enjoy cheap fruit and vegetables.

I came away from Delano almost as confused as when I had arrived. As in so many cases, there are two sides to each story, with the truth lying somewhere in between. In this case, I found both sides *lying* to their best advantage.

Sometimes people like Chavez begin to believe their own publicity. In 1976, he felt he had the people of California behind him. Once and for all, he was going to lock into law advantages for the UFW that he hadn't been able to get through the usual channels of legislative action. To do this, he used the initiative process and, with concerted effort, got the required signatures to introduce laws onto the ballot, in just over one month.

Chavez had so convinced himself he was going to win, he even convinced Governor Jerry Brown to join the effort and risk some political prestige. Brown give it his all, appearing on television programs and commercials. The election was one of the biggest fiascos this state had seen in some time—a tremendous defeat for the UFW. Interestingly, the largest number of favorable votes came from the large urban areas such as Los Angeles and San Francisco. In the rural areas, the votes were overwhelmingly against Chavez. It was the

publicity that had won votes from those city dwellers not involved in farming.

As emotional as the grape strike was in the '60s, illegal aliens in California has been the emotional issue of the '70s. California's Lieutenant Governor Mervyn Dymally has statistics to show that his state will be the first "Third World state" by 1990. In that year, minorities will make up 60.7% of the total population. Add to that the more than one million illegal aliens, which the Los Angeles Police Department estimates for that city alone, and it is understandable that the social conflicts keep intensifying.

The disparity of standards of living between Mexico and the United States incites illegals without the proper working papers to risk life and limb crossing the border. The availability of cheap labor and, in many cases, very good labor, causes employers to not even question the legality of the workers. Raid after raid is made on the same factories, the workers are deported, and the next day the factory fills with illegals again. In some cases the very same illegals have snuck back across the border within days.

Recognizing that without the availability of jobs, most illegals would not try the risky border crossing, legislation was prepared, voted on, and signed into law by Governor Reagan in 1971. It would impose a \$500 fine on those who knowingly employed illegals if that employment had an adverse effect on workers who are citizens or here legally. It was immediately challenged in the courts on the basis that this state law preempts federal jurisdiction. In the winter of 1976, the Supreme Court of the United States ruled it was perfectly legal for any state to assume this jurisdiction. Yet no effort was made in California to implement its own law. A minor court injunction still remains that precludes its use.

For years people across the United States have been trying to get federal action through the Rodino Bill to tackle the

problem at its source by punishing employers. Yet in California a law exists that does that very thing—it was even tested in the U.S. Supreme Court.

When I discovered this in the spring of 1977, I called Attorney General Evelle Younger about it. He said that if the governor or the labor commissioner became his client and asked him to go to court to void the injunction, it would be a simple matter and the law could be implemented.

So I called Labor Commissioner James Quillin and asked him why he had not taken such action. He said that his staff attorney had advised him it would be too complex a matter. He also added that he did not think it was a good law and, unless the governor ordered him to take action, he would not.

I talked with Governor Brown three times on the program about this matter. The first time he professed ignorance that it had come back from the Supreme Court. The second time he claimed there was a court-ordered injunction against the law. I advised him that Attorney General Younger said if he were asked to go to court, it could simply be lifted. The governor was piqued at that suggestion and said Attorney General Younger could do the same thing without needing the governor to request it (which is true). The third and last time I talked with the governor on the matter, he suggested it would be better to wait for President Carter to come out with his plan and implement it so there would be no state/federal conflicts.

It seemed to be much too hot a political issue for even the highest officials of the state of California to handle. No matter which way they went on the issue, it was sure to anger certain elements. Since both Governor Brown and Attorney General Evelle Younger were obviously going to run for governor against each other, neither wanted the millstone around his neck. I can't answer for the attitude of Labor Commissioner Quillin, but he does work directly for

the governor, and anything he would do would reflect on the governor.

It was a tremendous, well-documented lesson for my listeners on the workings of government. Here was a piece of legislation written into the Labor Code of California. It had gone through all the legal processes. It had gone all the way through the court system and had been upheld. It was relevant to one of the most important issues in the state and the country. Yet, out of political expediency or personal bias, the highest officials of the state refused to implement the law. No wonder people fail to show up at the voting booth so frequently. This lack of commitment to carry out the law would turn off the most dedicated voter.

Not everyone enjoys my spreading previously unknown information out over the airwaves. To the best of my knowledge, only once did the investigatees try to "get" the investigator. During the early stages of the building of San Francisco's BART (Bay Area Rapid Transit) subway system, I received many complaints from listeners whose property was in the direct right-of-way of the system. These people felt they were being treated shabbily in terms of reasonable notice and price paid for their land.

I arranged for an interview with the engineer in charge of land condemnation for BART. I told his public relations man exactly what I would talk about, and I was prepared with many specific documents and charges. As I began throwing these at the engineering official, he got more and more tongue-tied. He began stuttering, spewing, and, finally, just kept pleading, "But you don't understand." I did understand. That was the problem.

At the time I was working at a station owned by the large Metromedia Company. They had begun as a billboard company and expanded to include radio and television stations. Subway car cards in major cities were very much a part of their existing business. Totally unknown to me, they were

bidding for the car card business on the BART system. Had I known this, I still would have broken the story.

A week later, management received a letter from BART officials saying they were distressed by how I had treated their representative on the air. They went on to say that it seemed strange that a company trying to get the franchise for their car card business would allow an irresponsible person like Hilly Rose on Metromedia's air. They thought perhaps I might be happier in a place like Los Angeles.

The implications were quite clear. It was implied blackmail. They were suggesting Metromedia fire me outright, or at least transfer me to Los Angeles (Metromedia also had a radio station there) where I would be out of the way. Nowhere in the letter did they refute the charges made on the air.

To the everlasting credit of station manager Varner Paulsen, the entire incident was never mentioned to me. I found out about it through a friend some weeks later. I was eventually dropped from the station, more than a year later, but only when they changed their programming to all music. Still, they had kept me for six months after all the other talk show hosts were gone. BART still is a financial millstone for Bay Area taxpayers and much of the problem has been proven mismanagement, especially in the early years.

This raises one of the most frustrating aspects of being an investigative reporter on a talk show. Frequently news is only considered news if it is broken by the daily paper or the biggest TV news shows. While my show and other talk shows have had some results (See Chapter Nine), we could be a much more potent force if the other media would not be so arrogant and would work along with us. The print media generally feels that unless they break the story, they would rather ignore it. Newspapers will only grudgingly admit that a radio telephone-talk show host beat them to a story and frequently will omit that broadcaster's name if they do print

it. With declining readership across the country, it seems many newspapers have a policy of ignoring radio because they think it is direct competition. Television needs a visual story. It is not good enough to quote a talk show host. They want to see the event occur. I don't blame them, but when I can get the principal people involved into the studio, television still refuses to come because my station name is on the microphones.

I tried to dignify my profession by applying for membership in the Radio and Television News Directors Association (RTNDA). They wouldn't even take my application. So I said I would accept associate membership. They considered it and turned me down. The official reason was that I was not working directly in news. This despite the fact that I was breaking hundreds of stories each year.

Television in particular is guilty of corrupting the news business through their policies and practices. Specifically, they stand charged with fostering press conference journalism. An assignment editor directs TV crews to as many stories as possible in one day. So the reporter has little time to get the full details, and even less to properly prepare and report his story before it is on the air. In major cities such as Los Angeles, a TV crew can file four or five stories simply by covering various press conferences being held at the conveniently located L.A. Press Club. Sometimes even those won't get coverage if the visually oriented TV crew has a couple of fires and a police shooting to record for the evening viewer. The reporters and assignment editors are not at fault. It is management who has determined the public doesn't want to see more than 20 seconds of anything but the most gruesome or entertaining developments of the day. I cringe sometimes when I hear misstatements being palmed off by reporters who didn't have time to get their facts. Generally this means someone will phone my program to discuss an issue based on the misinformation. I challenge their facts, but many

times fail to convince them because after all, "It was on TV."

Newspapers do a much better job. They don't pay their reporters as much, which can mean more reporters with as much time as necessary to get the facts in depth. By going to press basically once a day, they can give their staff more time to do their job well. Still, I have read statements, supposedly factual, that were untrue or showed bias by someone involved in the process of getting that story printed.

Frustrations abound as a talk show host. In the evening after the great Los Angeles earthquake, Tuesday, February 9, 1971, I had the federal administrator on my program who said officially that the federal government would aid the earthquake victims financially and he explained how to apply. I seethed for two days as I read and heard the other media wondering whether the federal government would give such aid. Finally, on Thursday night, KNXT television had as its lead story that, indeed, the feds would provide the aid, and the *Los Angeles Times* had it as their lead headline story the next morning. My news was apparently not their news.

The 1971 Los Angeles earthquake occurred early in the morning. There was no other news story that day for Los Angelinos. I phoned many experts concerning the quake to provide as much hard news as possible. Especially important was whether the Van Orman Dam in the San Fernando Valley would hold. More than 20,000 residents had already been evacuated. Strong aftershocks were being felt into the evening hours and a really big one might have cracked the dam wide open.

The man who invented the accepted earthquake measurement is Dr. Ernest Richter. On my program, I phoned him at home to discuss what the measurements meant. After all, a six on the Richter scale is just a number. Specifically what did it mean in terms of devastation? Dr. Richter and I were chatting away when there was a sudden, strong swaying. That could be an important one. I asked Richter for an

approximation of its strength. He said, "Oh, I've got a scale right here at home. Just a minute and I'll give you an exact reading."

There were a few anxious moments, especially for the folks listening in the San Fernando Valley. Finally Dr. Richter returned, "Don't panic. That one was just over a three on the scale. It shouldn't do any major damage." I imagine he did a great deal more to calm fears than anything anyone else could have done at that moment.

One of the important stories of 1977 was broken on my program in 1974. Other talk shows I am sure also brought it up from time to time, but nothing appeared on television or on page one in the newspapers until 1977 when it was too big to ignore. Despite all this, the average American still does not know much about either the Bilderberg Organization or the Trilateral Commission. Almost half of President Carter's Cabinet and many of his top-level appointees have come from the Trilateral Commission. President Carter himself was a charter member. Vice-President Mondale and Henry Kissinger are members. Top government and political leaders from around the world get together in secret meetings. Reporters are barred from the Bilderberg and some inner Trilateral meetings, so nothing gets in the news about the meetings. The Rockefellers and Rothschilds are prominent members. Indeed, David Rockefeller is the founding father. With such superstars, one would think this was big news. Various radio talk show hosts tried to tell their listeners about it, but since it wasn't printed in the morning news or presented by a toothy newscaster, it obviously wasn't important to most people.

Finally in 1977 the top-secret Bilderberg meeting was mentioned in a few sentences by a wire service. This was mainly because the head of the Bilderberg Organization, Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands, had to be replaced due to the Lockheed scandal. The Trilateral Commission got a

whole page in both *Newsweek* and *Time*, plus various stories in the dailies, but these articles only showed how many important and influential people were members. What was being accomplished by these organizations seemed not to be newsworthy. I find it difficult to believe you can put so many world leaders in one room and not find something consequential going on. To this day, other than the talk shows, it is a matter of some indifference to the news media.

It has been the policy of many nations, including the United States, not to bargain with terrorists. The world applauded when the Israelis skillfully retrieved the hostages at Entebbe. Yet the world press are the true hostages and are repetitively journalistically raped. They not only refuse to complain, they enjoy it so much they come back as often as possible. They allow themselves to be manipulated and effectively give the terrorists what cannot be achieved any other way—vast amounts of publicity to the cause (whatever it may be).

No group did it better, and to better effect, than our own Symbionese Liberation Army (SLA). The very word *army* was a gross misnomer that the press allowed to sink into the public consciousness over the many months of publicity rape. In fact, the group was a handful of pseudointellectual criminals. They certainly have my admiration for the sheer genius of kidnapping a wealthy newspaper heiress. Not only did they have the benefits of great wealth, which provided them with the spectacle of the free food fiasco in Oakland, but they also had a lock on the press which dutifully printed their Mao-Communist rhetoric.

It is understandable that the Hearst press went along with the publicity demands of the SLA. To some degree, it is understandable that some of the other print media would be sympathetic and also print this rhetoric. It is absolutely beyond belief that the radio and television media would play

and replay the actual tape recordings of these ideological rapists, murderers, and bank robbers.

What happened to the scream of First Amendment rights? If the Communist Party of America (let alone the Communist Party of Russia) attempted to buy space to promulgate their philosophies, they would have been turned down flat. But feed a little sensationalism to the press and they give the space away. It was especially amusing, in a wry way, to watch television focus their "Action" cameras on tape unspooling from a recorder, or vintage still photos of Patricia Hearst as we listened to the various tapes. What happened to the plaintive cry that television couldn't cover the story because there was no video?

Hopefully this type of incident will not occur again. But even the terrorists have become more sophisticated and I can foresee the day when we are treated to a home videotape recording of say, Getty's grandson having his ear cut off. Now *there* is "Action" television. Or, with the trend toward sex on TV, maybe we can see the kidnap victim being forced to perform aberrant sexual acts. That certainly should make the network news, and probably worth a repeat at year's end when they review the big stories of the year. Of course, from the terrorists' point of view, they need only send a copy of such a tape to the head of a network (presupposing his wife is the victim) and I can just imagine an entire evening preempting prime-time programming so we can better understand the philosophy of the radicals. Stranger things have happened.

The time is long overdue for those in every avenue of the news-gathering and information-dissemination business to quit probing the ethics of others until they take the time to set forth a code of ethics for themselves. Let the investigator investigate his own motives before outside forces bring forth an unwanted censorship.

One of the immediately recognizable symbols of America's indifference to its own is Watts. Here remains the seething antagonism of what black people perceive to be benign neglect. Any news media person worth his salt is sensitive to any story that comes out of Watts to ensure that it is reported fairly and will not inflame racial tensions.

The Watts Festival and Parade was, for many years after the violent uprising of 1965, a major civic event dutifully reported by most media. As the years pass, it too suffers from neglect and continues in financial difficulty, a shadow of its former importance. But in the summer of 1970 the big parade was still a *big* parade. Essentially, it was a people's parade. Residents of the area marched in whatever costume suited their fancies. Automobiles used were those available to this low-income community. Animals were not necessarily thoroughbreds.

My favorite investigative reporting story concerns that 1970 Watts Parade. An extremely distraught lady phoned the program around 9:30 P.M. Late in the afternoon, as the parade was passing her home, a man riding a rather bedraggled horse passed by. The horse keeled over and dropped dead directly in front of her house. The rider got another man to help him drag the dead horse onto the caller's lawn and they both kept marching on in that parade. The caller assumed they would send someone back for the horse, but here it was 9:30 in the evening and the dead horse was still there.

I asked if she had taken any action. She said, "Yes, I called the police, but they wanted to know what crime the horse had committed. Unless there was a crime, there was no action the police could take." I thought about the logic of that for a moment and then asked if she had called anyone else. "Yes, I called the fire department and they wanted to know in what way the horse was a fire hazard. If not, they

could take no action." I resisted the impulse to suggest she set the horse afire, and asked if she had called anyone else. "Yes, I called the health department and they wanted to know if the horse had a communicable disease. Otherwise they could take no action."

This sounded like a major put-on, but since callers are anonymous and since it involved Watts, it seemed best to check it out. I promised to call the lady back and asked my phone screener to get her name and telephone number. A prank caller never gives his correct phone number. This one checked out, and the lady was truly distraught.

I phoned the Recreation and Parks Department and they said if the animal was not on their property, it was out of their hands. I checked with the traffic division of the LAPD and they said if the animal was not causing a traffic problem, it didn't concern them.

I got out my list of inside city and county telephone numbers. Who should I call to help this lady? Disaster Relief seemed improbable; this was only a disaster to the lady with the dead horse on her front lawn. The Mental Health Department might be called in a few days if the horse remained on her property that long. Air Pollution Control might eventually get involved when the horse disintegrated. Finally another caller came up with the information that there was a Dead Animal Removal Unit run by the County of Los Angeles. Here obviously was the solution.

Nothing in government is all that simple. I got the Dead Animal Removal people on the telephone. Yes, that was their job and they would be willing to remove the dead horse. Was the horse in the county or in the city? I had no idea. Why would it make any difference, since it was a county service and the city was very definitely in the county? "Oh, we don't pick up dead animals in the county after 10 o'clock at night." The clock on the wall said 10:20. Risking

my credibility as a broadcaster, I assured the department that the horse was in the city. They said they would dispatch a crew.

About 15 minutes later, I got a phone call from a man who said he was on the crew that was supposed to remove the dead horse. He found the horse and it was on Kosciusko Street and he would be happy to dispose of the horse, but could I get someone to drag it around the corner to 32nd Street? I couldn't believe that we had run into another complication and asked why? The caller sighed wearily and said, "Well, you know the city. We've got all these forms to fill out in multiple copies. I've got a lot of work to get done tonight and I can spell 32nd Street, but I can't spell Kosciusko Street." The caller broke down in gales of laughter. It was an old joke they tell about New York City, but frankly, after that experience, I could have believed almost anything.

The lady with the dead horse called to say it finally was removed. My career had reached its pinnacle. As a radio talk show host, I have interviewed the highest leaders of government and industry. I have been involved in covering some of the biggest stories of the century. I have influenced legislation. Finally, I had been influential enough to get a dead horse removed in the middle of the night.

7

The Militants Speak Out

On May 2, 1967, the citizens of California were startled by reports of a gang of armed black men approaching the state capitol in Sacramento in two automobiles. They were attempting to penetrate the floor of the state legislature specifically to get to then State Senator Don Mulford.

Senator Mulford was pushing legislation to prohibit fire arms in public places. Their guns turned out to be unloaded and were in plain view; thus, they broke no laws and were simply rebuffed by guards at the door of the capitol. They seemed to disappear as magically as they had materialized, and no one knew who they were.

Despite all the excitement they caused, news people found it difficult to get a line on them. I immediately sent word through the black underground sources I knew that these people, whoever they might be, were welcome to appear on my program that night to tell their story. I went on the air not knowing if anyone would show up.

Just before the program started, a well-dressed black man arrived, introduced himself as Eldridge Cleaver, and said he would wait.

About an hour into the show, three men in tams and black leather jackets appeared and said they were part of the group that had been to the capitol. The spokesman (who himself had not made the trip) turned out to be Huey Newton. He went on the air and for the first time told the citizens of Northern California about the goals, aims, and aspirations of his new group called the Black Panthers.

This was to be the first of many appearances by various members of the Black Panthers over a period of two or three years. My program was an effective means for telling the community what they were doing and why; and it was also an effective means for the community to tell the Black Panthers just what they thought of them and their methods.

Two days after the Sacramento incident, I thought Senator Mulford ought to have an opportunity to express how he felt about the way the Panthers had tried to get an appointment with him.

Mulford arrived at 11 P.M. with his own group of state guards. Still not really knowing what kind of people the Panthers were, I had earlier notified the Oakland police that there might be trouble, and I wanted protection for both Mulford and myself. They assured me there would be no problem.

While we were on the air, the radio studios were crawling with plainclothes police and more lieutenants than I knew they had. There were no incidents and at the end of the broadcast Mulford walked out taking the state guards with him. I stopped in my office to file some material and to call home to assure everyone that I was still in one piece.

Ten minutes later when I started to walk down the hall and out of the building I was a little surprised to find no evidence of the police anywhere. Even more surprising, when I went to get my car in Jack London Square, this normally busy tourist attraction even after midnight was totally dead.

There was no one anywhere. I got in my car and drove home, muttering to myself about the inefficient police who had left me to some uncertain fate.

The next day I called the Oakland police lieutenant in charge of the detail and gave him holy hell for withdrawing his men before I was safely on my way. He flipped casually, "Oh, we didn't withdraw our men. You were under surveillance from every angle."

That did it!

Now I really blew up and poured out a stream of invectives, using every four-letter word I ever learned in the army. Briefly it boiled down to, "You sons of bitches. I asked for protection and you set me up for a clay pigeon."

The lieutenant retorted calmly, "Listen fellow, we have to have a victim before we arrest anybody."

That was the last time I ever played hero and asked for police protection.

The mid-sixties were turbulent times and the activists seemed to congregate in the San Francisco Bay Area. From the flower children to the Panthers, if it was happening in the nation, it happened bigger and first around the Bay. While there were so-called underground radio stations that specialized in rapping with the sub-culture, my station was big enough to cover the entire community. All sides knew I would give them a fair shake in getting their story out.

Huey Newton, Eldridge Cleaver, and other black militants were frequent visitors to the show. (I soon got over my nervousness about their trigger fingers. They seemed only to be in armed conflicts with the police, not radio personalities.) Kathleen Cleaver (Eldridge's wife) was a frequent guest because she was bright, highly educated, and generally lapsed into ghetto language to get her points across (which I dutifully erased with my seven-second tape delay to avoid

losing our FCC license). It always made for interesting listening and allowed me to argue forcefully with someone in the movement who was articulate.

Mine was the first radio program Eldridge Cleaver had ever been on (see insert). The last time I talked with him by phone, he was in Algeria hiding out from U.S. authorities. Eldridge had conceived a new "Black Declaration of Independence" which was to be presented at Independence Hall in Philadelphia on the Fourth of July, 1970. Huey Newton carried it out as planned.

When I talked with Cleaver the night of the fourth, I was armed with a lengthy Associated Press story that hardly made the back pages of most newspapers. He begged to be told that it was on every front page in America. It suddenly struck me how easy it is to be deluded with one's self importance. Cleaver truly believed he was going to affect America from his exile in Algeria. Soon afterward, Eldridge began his world travels, settling in Paris for a few years. He turned to designing clothes and, when that didn't bring acceptance, decided to come home and face trial on the shooting charges that caused him to flee originally. His born-again acceptance of Jesus is nationally known through his many television appearances. The evangelical world was shocked, however, when Eldridge brought the world "Cleavers." These are men's pants that emphasize the male genitals so they look dressed rather than repressed. Charles Colson and others admonished him not to damage his ministry, with an injunction from the Apostle Paul that all things are lawful but not all things are expedient. Eldridge will not be getting into pants because, "The Holy Spirit convinced me." Like his politics, pants that bring the phallus outside the body may be some years ahead of public taste.

Huey Newton returned from Cuba in 1977 to face a variety of charges in the courts. The entire matter came full circle when he led a group of Panther children and workers into the California legislature to receive an award for the

community schools and social work of the Black Panthers. This was exactly ten years from the time those strange black men with guns no one had ever heard of were barred from that same state capitol.

I left San Francisco eight years ago, but listeners there still remember and write to me concerning the Geary Street Incident. To the shame of the news media in that town, they were conned into covering up a major riot in the heart of the city during rush hour.

In the same way that the Symbionese Liberation Army used the media to get their story *out*, frightened civil rights leaders kept this riot secret. It wasn't until two days after I broke the story on the air that the city's two major newspapers wrote about it, and then it was buried somewhere close to the vital statistics column.

Hunters Point is to San Francisco what Watts is to Los Angeles or Harlem is to New York. Well-meaning whites keep trying to impose their culture and values on blacks in the belief "it will make them better people." They once tried sending the entire San Francisco Symphony to Hunters Point and put signs up all over the community promoting the free concert. Three people showed up.

The Geary Street Incident stemmed from another of those culturally inspired programs. A leader in the poverty program accepted an invitation to the highly respected theatrical group ACT (American Conservatory Theatre) to see a matinee at the downtown Geary Theatre. Three busloads of black teenagers from Hunters Point were taken to the theater. They were to be picked up immediately afterwards and transported back to Hunters Point.

The performance itself was a socially conscious play, mainly antiestablishment, so it was felt the youngsters would relate to the message of this particular presentation. They certainly did.

At the 4:30 P.M. final curtain, the buses had not arrived. The youngsters flowed out of the theater, onto the streets,

and into the fancy shops in the district. They "fingered" the expensive merchandise—leather jackets, shoes, purses, shirts, whatever could be taken—and did. Many store windows were shattered and looted. Others jammed the basement bar underneath the Geary Theatre demanding cokes and other drinks. The bartender asked for money or no service. He was beaten and blinded in one eye.

The police were called. By 5:15 the buses rolled up. The poverty leader convinced the police officials that if they tried to arrest the youngsters there would be serious rioting at the height of the rush-hour traffic and many innocent citizens would be imperiled.

The solution was simple. Put the teenagers on the buses with their stolen merchandise. When they arrived at Hunters Point, the poverty leader would see to it that the merchandise was taken from the youngsters and returned to the owners. The police bought it. It was the only thing that was *bought* that day!

The next day an irate caller demanded to know from me why the riot had not been reported in the papers. Since this was the first I'd heard of it, I began checking around on the air by calling the theater, the bartender, the police, and finally, by the end of the broadcast, the poverty leader involved.

Interview after interview brought out some very sordid facts. When the youngsters got to Hunters Point they split with the merchandise. The poverty leader told me not to worry. He would personally guarantee the return of all the merchandise or would see that the merchants got paid. I demanded to know with what money? He said they had a private fund for that. I asked about the blinded bartender. He said all medical expenses would be paid for.

This was a long, continuing story as day after day I called the merchants and the bartender to see if any action had been taken. To this very day, not one article has been

returned or paid for. To this very day, the bartender at the Geary can't see out of one eye. He did not have medical insurance. He has not received one cent in payment.

The poverty leader, by the way, was eventually hired by the radio station I was working for and became a talk show host. Until a recent talent purge, he was an interviewer in San Francisco on a major television station.

Soon after the Geary Street Incident another poverty program outing from Oakland was being transported on a chartered bus home from a picnic. The bus broke down on a main street and the youngsters poured off into a liquor store. They ripped off hundreds of bottles of liquor, raced back to the bus, which was now fixed, and disappeared into the afternoon. I tracked this one down to the bus company who insisted they could not give me the name of the driver or the group because it was against federal rules and regulations.

Incidents like these and the special care and treatment given the malefactors caused me to examine my own liberal tendencies. More and more on the air I began to question what we were doing to our society in our attempts to aid poverty groups that had once been its victims.

Invariably, if one questions the actions of certain ethnic groups and how they abuse the use of the taxpayers' money, there is the charge of racism. If one questions favoritism toward an ethnic group, there is always going to be an element that charges bigotry. I am frequently charged with both. Whether it be about the blacks, the Chicanos, the Jews, the Arabs, the Greeks, the Turks, I am always delighted to find that both sides usually attack me. I must be doing something right.

An example of such strange charges occurred during the riots at San Francisco State College. The blacks called an open-air conference on campus which was attended by all prominent blacks in the area, including county supervisors. Pacifica radio station KPFA (the one the SLA used to get

their message to the world) somehow taped that all-black meeting and ran it.

I happened to hear it and felt it was so bigoted that it should be exposed to a more diverse audience. I requested a tape from KPFA, they complied, and I played it on my program. The charges of spying and bigotry on *my* part came by the hundreds from all over. I had simply played, unedited, the exact tape KPFA had aired—but no one reacted to their airing of it. Charges of racism seem to be a selective thing.

I have long been a supporter of black causes. I believe strongly that the position of black people in America has to be corrected. Despite my distaste for the violence and abuses of the system by some groups, I have always voiced a desire for fairness and equality. When I moved from San Francisco to Los Angeles in 1970 I refused to tell anything about my background just to see if I could have better discussions, free of prejudged prejudices (i.e. "Were *you* in the military?" As if one couldn't discuss our involvement in Vietnam without having actually served in the military).

On one occasion I took a white bigot to task and read him the riot act citing chapter and verse of how wrong he was for what he was saying about the blacks in this country. That started a stream of phone calls inquiring whether I was black. I parried the question, again on the theory that the color of my skin had no bearing on the validity of my arguments. Many of the listeners took my reluctance to mean I must be black. I mean, why on earth would I deny I was a white man?

I heard from hundreds of blacks who had never called before. Their basic message was, "Hang in there, baby, you're ten feet tall!"

Long ago it was driven home to me that there are three sides to every story: your side, my side, and the truth in

between. I have decried any cause that claims it has all the truth. Ten years before the oil embargo I was trying to tell my listeners that the Arabs had some cogent arguments on their side. It was blowing in the wind in San Francisco in the sixties but, in 1970 when I came to Los Angeles with its heavy Jewish population, it was heresy. The name-calling began with "traitor" and got more savage from there. The bomb and death threats were the most violent I've ever seen. Today my same position causes not a ripple in Los Angeles, but it does bring out the vicious anti-Semites. I get vicious back.

Politically I am very hard to categorize, and my long-term opposition to the war in Vietnam only confuses those who choose to believe I am a fellow conservative.

One early morning in the late sixties a group of draft evaders at the Army's Presidio in San Francisco were so appalled at the conditions under which they were imprisoned in the stockade that they refused an order by an officer. Instead, they gathered together and sang the "Star Spangled Banner." For this dire act they were court-martialed for mutiny.

The regular news media picked up the story the first day and then dropped it. Two groups did not: First, the U.S. Army, who decided to go all the way with this one to show they could not be pushed around; second, the antiwar groups who, on investigation, found the 14 men to be basically hardship or traditional goof-off cases that should not have been in the army in the first place.

The charge of mutiny was so rare, the punishments so severe, and the action so insignificant, I took an interest in the case. Day after day my program developed more and more information to show how these 14 men were being railroaded into long prison sentences. The normal news media ignored the case entirely. I knew the city editor of the biggest paper in town and pleaded with him to take an

interest in at least following the court-martial proceedings in the papers. Total blank.

I decided to do something dramatic. I contacted the antiwar movement and they produced a volunteer who had been in the Presidio stockade with the other 14. He had not participated, but had escaped and was AWOL. He intimately knew the men and the conditions at the stockade. The story he told was shocking.

It apparently shocked a number of the good citizens of the town to hear live on the radio someone that the authorities could not apprehend. Calls poured in to the military police, the FBI, the U.S. Coast Guard, the local police, and every authority possible. Since I was in my studio I can't vouch for how many law enforcement officials showed up outside, but there must have been quite a number from the stories I've heard.

In midsentence during the broadcast, the AWOL guest suddenly said, "That's it. I'm leaving." Unbeknownst to me, other members of his group had set up a watch. When they thought things were getting too hot, they gave him a signal and spirited him out of the building. To this day, I have no idea how they got him out. I just know there were a lot of foolish-looking officials.

This attention caused some of the local papers to start carrying the developments of the case as it unfolded. The sentences were severe (seven years at hard labor, for instance), but constant publicity caused the military to mitigate the sentences.

In one case, an aged father came to my studio door while I was on the air saying he had traveled by bus almost a thousand miles to say good-bye to his son who was to be sent to prison at Leavenworth, Kansas. The authorities at the Presidio wouldn't let him see his son before his transfer the next day. I immediately put that heartbroken father on the air and let him tell his own story. Magically the army

relented. Regulations can be broken in the name of humanity if bureaucracy is held up to the glare of publicity.

This chapter can't end without a word or two about feminist militants. Most militants lack a sense of humor, but there is probably no group with as total a lack of humor as the leaders of the women's movement. Betty Friedan was not only unfunny in our interview, she made it impossible to interject a question or thought because of her nonstop filibustering.

Kate Millett, on the other hand, is easy to interview—as long as you don't challenge her. She arrived at the studio a bit early, accompanied by three young ladies who were dressed a bit mannishly. They ensconced themselves on the floor in a hallway rather than sit on the chairs normally used by waiting guests. Bob Hudson (of the comedy team Hudson and Landry) walked by and, noting the clearly male attire and sitting positions of the four, casually said, "There's coffee in the newsroom if you *fellas* want any."

I didn't know this when Ms. Millett walked into the studio. She sat down quietly and said, "I have a light voice. Your engineer might want to take a level." I dutifully told the engineer (who happens to be an outspoken native of "Nuark, New Joisey") and his retort was, "Tell her to speak up or I'll belt her." That's the way Steve Muzzio normally responds to people and I didn't think anything of it. Kate, however, began to fume.

The nature of my program is controversy. I did my normal antagonistic interview and Ms. Millett began to boil over. She called me a red-neck interviewer, and I allowed that I hadn't called her names but had dealt with the issues. If she wanted to discuss her lesbianism I guess we could open that subject. That cooled her down a bit, but not much. She stormed out snorting that she'd have to screen her interviews more carefully. Her well-mannered friends in the

interim had defaced my picture hanging on the wall and left a vile note.

An executive of the leading feminist publication recently appeared on my show to plug an investigation they were doing relative to some nuclear matters. As the show progressed, it became increasingly obvious that the guest didn't know much about the technical side of her subject. When the program ended, her husband (who had accompanied her) gave her hell for all the mistakes she made. The guest turned to me with a weak smile and sailed out the door quipping, "Well, I guess it takes a man."

So much for militancy.

8

Callers from the World Beyond

Records that play strange tunes. Nationally known psychics whose prediction accuracy rate is zilch. Music from "life after death" that defies known electronics. All this was part of two wonderful, wacky, and exciting years investigating psychic phenomena. To this day I remain agnostic in the psychic area; but there is no disputing the facts and events that occurred.

When I started at KFI in 1972, they assigned me to the midnight to 4 A.M. slot. Yes, there really are folks up at that time of night—late workers, those who frequent bars and restaurants until closing time, early risers such as bakers and postal employees, and those inveterate insomniacs. Other well-established talk programs already had a lock on this substantial audience. What could I possibly do that would intrigue them to switch to a station usually identified with playing music?

I thought about Long John Nebel in New York who built his reputation in the midnight hours by talking to psychics, people who had been on UFOs, and other paranormal types. At the same time, the world-famous astrologer Sydney

Omarr called my program. He is a dedicated talk show listener. Let anyone mention the subject of astrology (especially an antagonist) and you can be almost certain that Sydney will be on the phone to challenge that point of view. He suggested that I devote my skills as an investigative reporter to doing an honest job of telling the truth about the psychic world. He felt it should be presented in a straightforward manner, letting the chips fall where they may. This certainly had not been done on the West Coast, and we all know there are more weirdos per square inch in Southern California than anywhere else in the world.

Flying saucers and Russian experimentation with parapsychology were very big in the news. I joined right in. Never had I seen such a response from the audience. The mail poured in. Twenty-four incoming telephone lines were incessantly busy. We heard from El Paso, Texas; Albuquerque, New Mexico; Salt Lake City, Utah; Tucson, Arizona; Wichita, Kansas; Calgary, Canada; Anchorage, Alaska; etc. Some people waited long-distance with their toll charges mounting for up to two hours to talk to a psychic.

Before detailing the most unusual of the many events that occurred, I would like to admit to some small prejudices. All my life I have been convinced of extraterrestrial life. It seems inconceivable that we could be alone on this little pinprick we call earth considering the vastness of this galaxy plus all the other galaxies. Whether this belief extends to an afterlife is still an open question; but it is open!

The other prejudice comes from years of reading newspaper accounts of flying saucer sightings. Almost all accounts are somewhat brief, indicating the editors don't think they merit very much space (tabloids excluded). A report normally gives the police account, which is rather straightforward. The majority of articles end with a variation of "no little green men were seen." Why journalists feel free to bias straight reporting of UFO and parapsychology stories is

beyond me. This holds true for TV anchormen who save these stories as "kickers" at the end of the show and wink at the audience. I see this as irresponsible journalism and am determined to give everyone involved a fair hearing. Four hours every night gave me the opportunity to hear some of the most amazing and sometimes farfetched accounts.

One basic characteristic holds true with all those who claim to have taken a ride on a UFO. These are intense individuals who seem to march to a different drummer than you and I. Their stories are fully developed and no amount of direct challenge can shake them. They look you straight in the eye as they weave the most complex tales. Yet they put more money into spreading their belief than they ever get in return.

Charlotte Blob (it rhymes with globe) is the one who stands out most vividly. A disciple of George Adamski, who claimed the UFOs bring Venusians to Earth, she has continued spreading his word since Adamski died. Mrs. Blob is an attractive, middle-aged woman who speaks with a sincerity that is hypnotic. She called one day and asked to be on the program. She arrived with photos and drawings to prove that the Venusians are amongst us. The individuals had dark, shoulder-length hair and dark, olive skin. Additionally, Mrs. Blob indicated that they had musical voices and spoke softly, much like herself.

I asked why the Venusians didn't show themselves if they were amongst us. She replied they were waiting for a better time when the world would open itself to them, but they did make themselves known to those who had open minds. Despite the full details of her story and the many photos, it was impossible for me to accept as factual anything she had to say. I demanded some kind of direct proof.

Charlotte Blob looked me straight in the eye and with her soft, even voice said, "You will have proof."

"When," I prodded.

"Soon!" And with that, Mrs. Blob collected her slides, drawings, and photos and went out into the early morning blackness.

Well, I've had a lot of weird ones on the program so I put the entire matter out of my mind. About ten days later my daughter came home from a college in Northern California to spend a week or so. She had not heard the program and I had not told her about it. As a matter of fact, I have long kept my program and my family separate. I rarely talk about my children on the air, as a protection from those who might attempt to get to me for something I said on the air that offended them, and I rarely discuss program content with my children. I would sincerely doubt Mrs. Blob knew I had a daughter.

One afternoon my daughter decided to go to a nearby supermarket. When she returned, it was obvious something disturbing had happened.

"Dad, you are not going to believe this."

"Try me."

"Well, it's too peculiar."

"That's my business these days. What happened?"

"I was rolling a cart down the aisle when this sort of strange person came up to me. He said, 'Hello, you don't live around here, do you?'

"I said, 'I live just around the corner.'

"'No you don't,' he insisted. 'You live up north.'

"I know when someone is trying to pick me up, but this was different. There was something so strange about it. I looked down for a second to collect my thoughts and when I looked up again, he was gone. We were in the middle of a long aisle and there was no way he could have gone to either end before I looked up. He just disappeared!"

I thought for a moment. Then I asked her to describe the man.

She said, "He had dark, shoulder-length hair, sort of an

olive dark skin, and he spoke in the strangest, soft, musical voice."

I wondered indeed whether Charlotte Blob had sent me my proof.

About two months later, my daughter was again home and had a second experience. She was walking in Westwood Village (a fancy shopping area in Los Angeles) when she spotted another man quite similar in appearance to the one she had seen in the supermarket. She was frightened and slipped into McDonald's noticing that the man was following her. This McDonald's has an upstairs balcony area and she fled there for refuge. She watched as the man entered the restaurant, took a seat, looked up at the area where she was hiding and disappeared before her eyes.

Let me assure you right now that my daughter is perfectly normal and has had no hallucinatory episodes before or since. Again, my daughter knew nothing of my broadcasts with Mrs. Blob before the incidents, and when I told her, she asked me not to pursue it. In deference to her, I did not. Indeed, what was there to pursue? Mrs. Blob said there would be proof, but only to those who are open. My daughter is a very accepting person. I am not. I challenge all facts and especially statements that are questionable or unsubstantiated.

The program has covered many major extraterrestrial events. The frequent sightings of UFOs in the early '70s where reputable officials, such as the governor of Ohio, said they saw them gave great impetus to psychic investigation. We were the first on the air with the story of the Pascagoula, Mississippi, UFO visitation. We talked with people who had been chased by UFOs and police officers who swore that a UFO hovered over the police station disrupting radio police calls. Many of these stories seemed to be unimpeachable because they followed so closely the very same patterns as other experiences with UFO sightings.

Eventually I developed an instinct for pinpointing major hoaxes. One of the biggest was at a football exhibition game in the stadium at New Orleans. I was on the air when the first wire stories began clacking across the country and immediately phoned the New Orleans police. They described the phenomenon for me as being a diffuse light in the sky. The sky was quite hazy. Many thousands of people at the stadium were watching the light as it just hung in the sky. The pattern simply did not match other sightings. Most take place in remote country areas away from city lights and crowds and they move in erratic patterns. The fact that an entire stadium of people were seeing the strange light made me doubt it was extraterrestrial. The additional factor of a diffuse sky condition made it quite likely someone knew how to play a good practical joke. I advised the police to follow the light and see if some very earthly humans were attached to a long string that stretched from the light to the ground. About an hour later, the wires carried the story that the hoax perpetrators were arrested with their backlit kite.

These episodes raise the interesting point that those of us who challenge the phenomena never see a UFO in the sky no matter how often we look. We never get taken for rides on UFOs. We never have out-of-body experiences. We never make good subjects for psychics who perform for the public. Only those willing to believe openly and freely seem to get involved. That brings us to Uri Geller.

Geller came around publicizing a book about his life. I agreed to put him on the show with two conditions: 1) He perform any minor miracles that would show he really could bend keys, etc.; 2) Magicians from the Magic Castle in Hollywood, preferably three, be in the room or be able to watch through a glass window from another room. The word came back that Geller would accede to neither. Would one magician be acceptable? No! What the heck. Book him anyway and let's see what happens.

Geller arrived with Andre Puharich (a well-known neurologist and parapsychologist) who had written the book. We went through all the hoopla about the light opening from the heavens and shining down on Uri when he was three years old, investing him with these unusual powers, and many other stories that to a factual reporter seemed suspect.

I kept prodding, prodding, prodding. Finally Uri looked at me defiantly and said, "All right, you insist on proof. I'll give you proof!"

Uri handed me a 3 x 5 card and took one himself. Turning his back, he asked me to draw something and he would duplicate it on his card with his back turned. He drew a nearly perfect reproduction of my simple circle with three lines through it. Uri was triumphant. But he had performed one of the basic stock-in-trade tricks that any competent mentalist can and does do frequently. At least three volumes in the Magician's Library at the Magic Castle show how.

I kept prodding. Finally in disgust he said, "Look, if you have a key, I'll bend it."

I offered a stock General Motors key that came with my automobile. Uri stroked the metal and tried bending it with his fingers. Nothing. He stroked the metal some more.

"See, see," cried Uri. "It's bending."

I looked with my naked eye and saw no perceptible incline in the metal. Program time ran out and before he left, Uri insisted on taking the key into the control room where there was a metal surface. He stroked the key once more, put it on the metal surface, and tried to bend it with force. The key gave way only the slightest amount. Uri claimed it would continue to bend for some hours. Uri never did check back, but in case he reads this, it did not bend sufficiently to deter me from using the key freely ever after.

Milbourne Christopher, former president of the Society of American Magicians, wrote a book in 1975 (*Mediums, Mystics and the Occult*, Crowell Publishers) debunking such

"performers" as Uri Geller. His research shows that Geller was wounded in the arm in the Six-Day War of Israel (which Geller also claims). Christopher says Geller recuperated by strengthening his arm muscles through weight lifting and practiced squeezing exercises to limber his fingers. He further points out that Geller strangely could not perform miracles or bend anything on the "Johnny Carson Show." Carson's people had taken the precaution of not letting Uri get anywhere near the props before showtime. Merv Griffin, on the other hand, wanted a show and got one. He took no such precautions.

Astronaut Edgar Mitchell later appeared on my program and was asked about the tests of Geller which he sponsored at the Stanford Research Institute. Mitchell admitted that 98% of what Geller did in the tests could be duplicated or explained. "Ah, but two percent remains the unknown," cautioned Mitchell. It should be pointed out that no magicians were in attendance or consulted during these "scientific" tests.

Mentalist Glenn Falkenstein has appeared on many national television programs. Living in Hollywood, he also appears frequently on my program and we are close friends. Glenn has no confirmed belief in the mystic. He says up front that what he does cannot be done. Then he proceeds to do it. Taking a cue from Uri Geller, he tells people to hold their ailing watches in front of the radio and they will begin to tick again. The switchboards are flooded with callers who breathlessly claim that, indeed, their watches are running. They also claim forks and spoons bend and one woman in San Diego called to say that the curtain rod in her living room bent in half. Power of suggestion? Coincidence? Glenn doesn't know how he does what he does. His mind is open. I would suggest that given the opportunity to get on the radio and put this suggestion in the minds of the audience, you, dear reader, would have the same powers.

I am not challenging Uri Geller's validity. I am showing how strange it is that these powers only seem to work with believers around. One has to be amazed at the powers of publicity and at the millions who are eager to accept miracles at face value.

Candy Jones and Long John Nebel tell about the night one of their guests, a psychic, was wearing a western cowboy costume. He was demonstrating hypnotic regression to a previous life. His wife was the subject and, with the studio lights out, the woman lay on the floor and told about a previous life in which she was an Indian. She said she was in the woods and it was very, very cold. She saw a big fire and warmed herself. The tale went on and on and Long John, who has interviewed thousands of psychics, was quite impressed. Impressed, that is, until he watched the "David Susskind Show" on television later in the week and saw the same psychic and the same wife go through the identical regression, word for word.

Another regression that caused some consternation occurred on the Howard Miller show at WIND in Chicago. The producer of the program agreed to submit to the psychic. Soon after he went under hypnosis, he began describing in great detail an affair he had had 200 years ago. It became so explicit that Howard had to stop the proceedings. The producer, of course, remembered nothing when awakened and, as a staff member, it is unlikely he used this occasion to be profane on the air. It was, at the very least, embarrassing, according to Miller.

Some of my adventures into the psychic world at KFI seem totally inexplicable. As the investigations continued, a strange cold spot began to develop in my studio. KFI had been located in an older building for some 30 years. The air conditioning was less than adequate. Yet, one corner became increasingly cold and somewhat damp, even in the heat of summer, but only when I was on the air. When the program

changed direction to investigations of politics and other matters, the cold spot disappeared as mysteriously as it had come.

The earliest of the strange phenomena occurred the night George McGovern gave his acceptance speech to the Democratic Convention. It was quite late at night and I wanted to hear some of what he was saying, which is difficult to do if you are talking on the air. I told Ray Grammes, my engineer, to play a new Peggy Lee album that had just come out. I liked the song entitled "Just for a Thrill" and, besides, it was almost four minutes long so I could hear more of the speech. I sat listening in the newsroom with a stopwatch so I'd get back to the studio in time for the next phone call. As I got back to the microphone, it was apparent this was not Peggy Lee's record being played. It was an instrumental of something quite different.

Later I asked Grammes why he had changed the music. He said he had played exactly what I had asked for and showed me the record. Well, it was obvious that since this was a brand new advance record, a mistake had been made by the record company when they pressed the album or the label was mismarked. I left it with a note for our music librarian Rudi Maugeri to send back to Capitol Records.

The next day Rudi called to ask what I had been drinking. I explained the whole story to him again. "But 'Just for a Thrill' is exactly what is on the record," complained Rudi. He thought I was nuts. Sure enough, when I returned to the studio that night and played the record, it was Peggy Lee singing "Just for a Thrill."

Ray Grammes and I then checked out every step he had taken the night before: every switch that was positioned, any possible interference that could have occurred. Might the NBC network line have inadvertently been cut in? I wrote to NBC to find out what they were sending down the line at that time. They could find no listing of the music we heard

on local KFI. In addition, Ray tells me that he watched the needle come to the end of the grooves as the music being played came to a natural conclusion.

One of two things obviously occurred. Either the world's strangest coincidence happened at that exact instant when the network music fed through a closed switch and went on the air, coming to a conclusion just as the Peggy Lee selection also came to a conclusion; or it was a sign to me that maybe there really is an occult world. I had been asking for a sign for many months. Peggy Lee would be obvious because she is my favorite singer. I might not have noticed another singer. This was a brand new album of my favorite singer. I had to notice something strange.

I phoned Peggy Lee hoping she could cast some light on the unusual occurrence. Peggy said it made no sense to her. She did however talk about her strong belief in the psychic. She also said that when she recorded that particular song she had just broken up with a boyfriend and the recording was very meaningful to her as well. I'm not sure this proves anything, but it is interesting that the event centered around an artist meaningful to me, and a song meaningful to her. How appropriate the title, "Just for a Thrill." I was really shook.

This was followed quite soon by another one of the world's strangest coincidences. I am told that what happened could not happen any other way than by coincidence. The odds for this event would have to be a zillion to one, at least.

Konstantin Raudive was a Latvian psychologist who was displaced during World War II and came to work and live in West Germany. He is foremost in the field of those who take factory fresh tape, push the record button on a tape recorder, and talk to whatever spirit is in the room. The idea is to ask, "Who is there?" then turn up the record volume and wait quietly for answers. When you play back the tape, sometimes there really are answers.

Stewart Robb (the man who translated Wagner's "Ring" for the New York Metropolitan Opera) appeared on my program and played some of Raudive's great successes. Raudive heard not only from dead relatives, but from the likes of the late Winston Churchill as well. Since Robb was a musician, he thought it would be fun to ask the spirits to send him some music. They responded with something similar to a gong. He had transferred the sound onto a cartridge so we could play it easily.

Two things are important to understand. KFI is a 50,000-watt clear channel station and its assigned frequency is where you turn to on the dial in case of national emergency. (Check your radio, you will find 640 marked for that purpose.) Thus, we had the best equipment of that day to preclude any electronic variations that might damage the transmitter. The other factor of consequence was the engineer that night, Mike Friedman. He normally did not work my show, but was replacing a sick engineer. He is one of those freewheeling people who take most things with a grain of salt and he let me know right off that he didn't believe in any of this psychic stuff.

Mike put the cartridge in the player, hit the button, and we heard a strange resonant gong. I looked up at Mike and saw him blanch white. He was struggling frantically with the equipment. To oversimplify a technical condition, let me say that most people know they must plug electrical appliances into the proper current or the appliance—hair dryer, refrigerator, television set, etc.—will be damaged. Power companies also know they must keep their current at or near a specific voltage for the same reasons. At KFI, the antenna current was at that precise moment much too low for the safeguard monitors to allow us to stay on the air. The reduced current could easily blow tubes worth up to \$50,000 and damage other costly gear. Yet, while the other-worldly gong was being played, the current wavered wildly, twice

went below levels of safety, and the fail-safe equipment failed to put us off the air as it was designed to do. The transmitter remained on the air with no damage of any kind. Mike couldn't believe what had happened and when we asked him to play it again, he absolutely refused. Later he told me an unbeliever had become a believer.

These things are not taken lightly by management. They must be investigated. Final determination: a speck of dust had settled on a condenser at the transmitter causing the extreme current variations at the *precise moment* we played the gong. It had never happened in 52 years of broadcasting, but it happened that night. Coincidence? Was someone or something trying to give me the proof I had been asking for? I'll probably never know in this lifetime.

What I do know is that many psychics came through my studios during the two years of investigation. Some were funny, some weird and just one was so incredibly accurate she could almost make a believer out of an agnostic. Doris Collins lives in Sussex, England, and visits the United States occasionally. She shuns fabricated publicity, is concerned fully with her work as a healer, charges less than any other psychic I am aware of and insists on devoting one full day each week to helping those too poor to pay anything. That's why, as opposed to Geller, Hurkos, Dixon, etc., you've probably never heard of her before.

When Doris first appeared on my program late in the summer of 1972, I was beginning to be bored by psychic mediums. They all missed a goodly number of inquiries by callers about friends or relatives who had passed over into the unknown; and strangely, all had different reasons for why they were not getting it right. Doris not only had a percentage of nearly 100%, but the detailed information she gave was impressive.

Doris Collins begins each session holding a small silver cross and praying to God for guidance. She holds the cross

during the entire broadcast. In a three-hour appearance we would take 25 or 30 calls. Many of these callers had physical afflictions. I thought Doris was having an epileptic attack or suffering some disease until I realized she was taking on the actual pain or affliction of the caller or of the person who had passed over.

If the caller had severe pains in his legs or poor circulation, Mrs. Collins would rub her legs and stamp them on the floor in the studio. This she did without any clue from the caller, reacting just to the sound of their voice. If messages came through from those who had died from violent causes, Doris would suddenly choke, turn bright red in the face, or perhaps clutch her chest in horror. I would be astounded and frequently would reach out to help her before I realized what all this signified.

One of the most outstanding "readings" on the program occurred when a woman from El Paso, Texas, tearfully asked Doris if she had any messages from her husband who had passed away 10 years ago. Doris clutched her heart and said, "I have a feeling of being cut off quite quickly from life . . . something to do with the heart." The woman in El Paso agreed he had gone suddenly of a heart attack.

In the studio I saw Doris strain a bit, then ask, "Who is George?"

The caller gasped and said, "That's my husband."

Doris went on, "He's showing me a bureau in your bedroom. In the upper lefthand drawer there is a black box in which you keep mementos of George."

"Yes, yes!" the woman cried out.

"In fact, you go there about twice a week and you opened the box last Wednesday when you felt depressed." The woman, who had been in tears to start with, now broke down and sobbed.

Mrs. Collins continued, "George asks me to tell you to get rid of these strong ties. Free him for his work at the next

plane. He wants you to know he loves you and he knows you love him; but you must not keep him around you all the time."

The lady from El Paso sobbed, "Yes, yes, I understand. Thank you, thank you so much. You have relieved this great weight on my heart."

Mrs. Collins slumped back in her chair and relaxed for the first time during the conversation.

Despite the fact that many thousands of people were trying to get through, I always wondered about the possibility that some of the calls might be shills. Yet Mrs. Collins was so completely accurate with each call, it seemed impossible that only shills could get through the busy switchboard. The final clincher was a call from a regular listener to the program (who had called many times in the past months, continually putting down the entire field of psychic phenomena).

When she got through to Doris she asked about her brother who had passed away. Doris responded, "I have a link with water, and a great pressure on the chest."

The caller cried, "Yes! He died in the Mediterranean during the war. He was on a ship."

Doris went on, "Your brother is concerned about your head condition. But it will be okay. Do you understand all that?"

"I do! I do! I loved him very much and he loved me."

On the same night, a pet theory of mine went down to stunning defeat. I had suspected that the clairvoyants were somehow responding to something in a caller's voice. Perhaps it was some kind of electrical-audio pickup that these supersensitive people locked into. Maybe they were getting additional radio reception from waves the rest of us could not hear; something like the high-pitched dog whistles that only dogs can hear. The planned experiment was unusual enough. Simply, Doris was in England, 6000 miles from

KFI, and the callers were to be plugged into a conference line from Oregon, Texas, or right here in California. Additional problems were added when the link between the callers and Mrs. Collins failed. We in the studio could hear both, but they couldn't hear each other. The only link was Hilly Rose who repeated the conversations to each. Doris was just as accurate with other callers as she was with the lady whose brother had drowned. Sitting 6000 miles from the KFI transmitter, there was no way she could have faked the scene by having a radio at her side while professing not to hear the callers.

The amazing, perceptive Doris Collins came to the studio one night after a long day of private consultations and an evening presentation to a large group. It was midnight and she was tired. We chatted about mediumship and finally we went to calls. She was wrong with the information she gave the caller. I brightened at this. Finally, I had a clue to her infallibility. Again, the second caller was read incorrectly. Doris looked completely wiped out. The screener waved from the control room, "Take line six immediately!" This caller said that Doris had been reading *her* on the first caller's reading. Then another call came from a man who said Doris had gotten him correctly instead of the second caller.

Doris knew what the problem was. Like a radio receiver that is improperly tuned, giving the wrong program, when Doris was tired, her fine-tuning apparatus was off the proper channel. She asked me to put a record on, then turned to a friend of mine who was visiting in the studio and asked if she could borrow some of his energy.

My friend was a psychologist visiting from San Francisco and he was a true disbeliever. He smirked, waved cavalierly, and said, "Sure, go ahead." Suddenly I saw him slump and throw his hand to his gut as though he had received a blow

to the solar plexus. At the same time I saw Doris brighten perceptibly, and continue with the program. She once again was right on channel and correct. Doris did not mention this incident to the audience, but I felt I should.

With all that went before, I still wanted something more from Doris. Perhaps a private reading might satiate my doubting investigative nature. I was determined to stump her by blocking my mind, by thinking nonsense thoughts, by reciting poetry in my head. Anything I could do to confuse her reading, I would do. Apparently Mrs. Collins was not in the business of reading my thoughts, she was getting her signals from somewhere else.

We began as she held her cross and asked me to pray with her. Afterward she looked very hard at me and said, "You really don't believe, do you?"

I said, "No, but I have a wide open mind. Let's call me agnostic."

She nodded and asked, "Who is the old man that is always around you. He is yelling. Who is Sam?"

Sam was my grandfather! He was the strongest man in character I have ever known. Sam died when I was 14, and I hadn't thought about him in over a decade. When I did think of him, it indeed was as an old man—and he frequently yelled at those around him. She had many messages for me from Sam that all made sense. Part of Doris' approach is to keep pressing you until you do remember that what she is saying is factual.

Suddenly she clutched her heart with great pain all over her body. She looked at me and asked, "Who died of a heart condition?" I thought immediately that must be my father.

"Who is Jack?"

That, of course *was* my father who died when I was 16. She had messages for me from my father that only I could know or understand; things that I have never shared with

anyone—and never will. Only Doris Collins in this plane will ever know, and she claims she doesn't know or remember what she says when in a trance.

In this open society of ours, I suppose Doris Collins could have taken the time and expense of digging into my past, but she would have had to do it too swiftly to have gotten much depth. Even if she had been able to find the names of people in my past, there is no way she could have found out the special little things that verified some unknown power. Was this highly developed ESP? Certainly everything she spoke of was in my mind or I could not have corroborated it. But I had tried to fill my mind with nonsense and had not thought of these personal events for years. Is it possible Doris Collins really is clairvoyant?

There is no need to guess at the abilities of ten leading psychics to predict the future. They were 100 wrong for the year of 1977. Each year the tabloids such as *The National Enquirer*, *Midnight*, etc., publish psychic forecasts for the coming year with big headlines and splashy layouts. They are fun to read but how accurate are they? Several years ago I began checking on one of the most famous seers, Jeane Dixon, and found her rate of correct predictions for previous years ridiculously low. Then I started buying up all the tabloid predictions I could find and asked my listening audience to send me any they might run across. It has become a tradition on New Year's night of each year that I open the forecasts published a year earlier and check their accuracy. My listeners have also sent in lists of their own predictions to see how they compare.

For the year of 1975 the professional psychics averaged 21% correct. One of my listeners got 50% of his predictions right. In 1976 the professional psychics averaged 20% out of over 1,000 predictions collected and filed. The year 1977,

however, was a real bummer for the psychic folks. They were accurate on only 3.2% of their writings. In all fairness, let's go back to those ten leading psychics mentioned above. *The National Enquirer* printed their guesses on January 4, 1977. These included the likes of Sybil Leek, Olof Jonsson, Page Bryant, Micki Dahne and Florence Vaty. An impressive list if you know the stars of the psychic world. Yet they scored an amazing zero. Not one correct prediction in the group. This one *Enquirer* fiasco accounts for the miserable averaged accuracy rate of 1977.

Apparently no one bothers to check these things at the publications, and they go right on printing the supposed future pointing out those few times the psychics have been correct in the past. Since there are no restraints by being forced to face up to their failures, the predictions get sillier and sillier. To quote a few from this psychic disaster printed by *The Enquirer*:

JACK GILLEN: Cary Grant will marry a teenage girl he met while both were trapped in an elevator in a London hotel.

SYBIL LEEK: Gerald Ford will start a new career as sports director for a major university and will also be a guest TV sports commentator.

CLARISA BERNHARDT: Peace will finally arrive in Northern Ireland after Pope Paul helps negotiate a settlement.

FREDERIC DAVIES: Freddie (Chico) Prinze will become the father of twins.

We all know that Prinze died in 1977 and did not have twins. Interestingly, not one clairvoyant in any publication I have read predicted the death of Elvis Presley. David Hoy in *Saga Magazine* said "Elvis Presley will announce his retirement." That's the closest anyone came. Sybil Leek writing in *Midnight* said, "Down Memphis way, Elvis Presley will announce his retirement. Poor health will be the reason. But

don't be surprised if old swivel hips makes several come-backs in the years ahead." Sybil, I would be astounded and shocked!

Micki Dahne, in *The Enquirer*, came up with this wild one: "Cuban Premier Fidel Castro will fall madly in love with newswoman Barbara Walters during an interview. She'll reject his advances—but he'll travel to the U.S. to be close to her."

Jeane Dixon writing in the November 29, 1976, edition of *Midnight* made eight predictions. One was correct, and that involved some rather obvious comments about Gerald Ford, such as "Gerald Ford will conceal his shock after losing to Jimmy Carter. President Ford secretly longed to continue to prove himself in the job." One needn't be a psychic to write those words.

On the other hand, Mrs Dixon predicted for 1977 that Jackie Kennedy Onassis would enter government as a goodwill ambassador involved in international diplomacy. There would be a congressional movement to oust Vice President Mondale because of his clashes with the president. She also said, "Gerald Ford's daughter will become a serious student at a leading university." In fact, Susan dropped out and began work as a regular on the Jim Nabor's television show.

Kenny Kingston is a wonderful showman and a better than average prognosticator of the future. His predictions for 1976 included the following, "The next President of the United States will have two 'R's in his name." How amazing that Jimmy Carter does have two 'R's in his name. Of course, so do Gerald Ford, Ronald Reagan, Nelson Rockefeller, Hubert Humphrey and Frank Church, to mention just some of the contenders.

For the year 1977 my listeners achieved a prediction accuracy rate of 28.75% against the published seers record of 3.2%. The two most prevalent of psychic predictions for any

year is that Jackie Kennedy will be married and the UFO people will reveal themselves to us. Some year that may come true, and all those psychics will trumpet their accuracy in such a major prediction. Yet I know of no major psychic who did not predict that Gerald Ford would *not* finish his two year term. Where have you read that they were wrong before this book? Let the reader beware!

I have not mentioned Sydney Omarr's participation because he does not wish to be thought of in terms of being a psychic. He is a top-ranking, very famous astrologer and strives heroically to give the art the dignity and prestige he feels it deserves. Only recently has Sydney broken through the prejudice of broadcasters against astrology by presenting a daily program on the Mutual Network. While Sydney is a whiz at profiling people and events by simply knowing their birth date, he is even better at (and proudest of) his Thought Dial system. By spontaneously giving Sydney three numbers he can immediately tell the caller many things about how he honestly feels and suggest ways to accomplish what he wants. I have never heard a caller tell him he is wrong.

Many talk show hosts have spent time investigating psychic phenomena with varying results. Long John Nebel at WMCA in New York is the most famous. Larry Glick at WBZ in Boston has discovered interesting and unexplainable events. Ed Busch at WFAA in Dallas based many programs on phenomena, including having Virginia Morrow play all of her regression tapes on his program. Virginia Morrow is the most famous of those who have been hypnotically regressed. You probably know her as Bridey Murphy.

As in my case at KFI, the phone calls always flooded in to these shows, but audience-measurement surveys indicated that most people were not interested and most talk shows no longer base their programs on psychic phenomena. Many shows will still have an unusual psychic on their programs,

but to the best of my knowledge, there is no major talk show host now basing his program on psychic happenings. Perhaps with the advent of the motion pictures *Star Wars* and *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, there may be a new interest in UFOs and parapsychology that will permit us to continue our search for the truth.

What have I learned from all this? I am reinforced in my beliefs that there are extraterrestrial beings somewhere near enough to be probing us. If we shoot their UFOs full of holes, we will be making a large intergalactic mistake. If one set down next to me and invited me aboard, I would go. But is there a psychic world? That is strictly up to you.

There is one psychic medium in whom I state, categorically, I have full faith and confidence. Kebrina Kincaid is a very pretty actress who specializes in finding missing persons. She works with the police in many difficult situations. She also predicts the future in *The National Enquirer* and other publications. In a local entertainment magazine, she wrote the following in 1973: "Hilly will write a book and it will be a best seller."

At that time I had no thought of writing a book. At least half of her prediction has already come true. How can you possibly deny the second half?

9

Political Potency

President Jimmy Carter, a radio talk show host? Would Nixon, Kennedy, Johnson, Truman, or Roosevelt have done such a thing? Yes, if they had thought of it. What an effective method of telling the American people that the president is just plain folks, like the rest of us. Nixon was a master at speaking without notes. Johnson would have corned anyone with his Texas charm and bullying. Kennedy would have filled such a show with humor and probably would have been rated number one across the country. Truman would have given them hell and they would have loved it. Roosevelt, we know, was a master at the use of radio.

Politicians have long used radio talk shows to pump pet projects or defend themselves against the slings and arrows of the media and political opponents. It is a lot easier to buffalo a caller than a national reporter who has done his homework. The art of using the media to its fullest potential is as important to politicians as knowing how to shepherd a bill through the legislature or Congress. Actually the art goes back to the town hall meetings in the days before radio.

Congressman Lionel Van Deerlin of San Diego, who now heads a committee revising the responsibilities of the Federal Communications Commission, was once a radio announcer. Congressman Robert K. Dornan, who seems to pop up on the major news programs of radio and television more than any other freshman congressman (or most old-timers, for that matter), has been a long-time radio talk show host in various communities. The Senate Whip Alan Cranston used to be a print reporter. Senator Jesse Helms of North Carolina is a former radio-television commentator. New York's Barry Farber has hosted talk shows for more than 18 years. He gave up an income of approximately \$100,000 a year to run in the 1977 race for mayor of New York City. Some politicians, such as former Treasury Secretary William Simon and John Dean, now have syndicated radio programs, while Bert Lance has moved into TV commentary. The list of radio talk personalities either in office or contemplating the move is endless. Boston's Avi Nelson left his popular radio talk show on WMEX in early 1978, plunging into a highly publicized controversy over his proposed challenge to Senator Edward Brooke.

It is really not so surprising. Politicians and radio talk show hosts are symbiotic. They need each other, and they use each other. What is surprising is that more talk show hosts have not made the jump to politics. Nothing is more frustrating than to research an issue, interview the key politicians, and know they are double-talking. All the interviewer can do is go on to the next interview. But the politician has the power to cast the influential vote.

Frequently I am urged to go into politics. I laugh it off by saying I can't afford the salary cut. State legislators in California make \$25,000 a year, and that is higher than almost any other state. Until I can get the backing to run for governor (who makes \$50,000), I'll stay where I am. The real truth, however, is that I have been luckier than most talk

show hosts. I have become deeply embroiled in the political scene through the program and have been able to strongly influence certain key issues. Why would I want to get lost in a legislature where I am only one vote?

Again let me make a legal point before I bring the wrath of the FCC down on my employers: Under the Fairness Doctrine (as opposed to the Equal Time Provision that applies only to political candidates and ballot measures), every effort must be made to balance comment on issues of major community interest. Thus, no responsible broadcaster will use his program as a platform to promote only one side of an issue. Great care must be taken to see that all sides of the issue are heard. Call screeners are instructed that no matter how many calls may be lined up to express a point of view, if one side has been very heavily presented, we must move up the new caller with an opposing point of view to balance what the listener hears at home. We must also affirmatively seek out opposition if none surfaces.

But the host gets to choose the topics he brings up. The host has probably spent a great deal of time researching those topics and has facts and figures at his fingertips. The host can cut off a long, rambling, purely emotional diatribe and label it for what it is. In short, by staying well within the guidelines of the Fairness Doctrine, the host can have a major effect on the people just by giving the issue a full hearing. Too many times something that affects us all is restricted to dry reporting in the daily press or just a few seconds on electronic media. The talk show host can spend hours or days discussing it from every angle. We don't always get the legislature to agree, but we at least let them know they have a battle on their hands. When we do win, the glory is sweet. Not only have we helped move the world an inch forward, but we become heroes to our listeners and our ratings go up.

Two battles the people lost come immediately to mind.

Early in 1977, Congress decided to give itself a large pay raise. While exhorting all Americans to hold down their requests for anything over cost of living increases to stem the tide of inflation, Congress was planning a whopping 28.9% increase of \$12,900 for itself. Surprisingly, most of America rolled over and played dead. Carter had just begun his presidency after a very lengthy campaign, a new and very liberal congress was in office, and almost no one had the energy for a fight against the raise.

Jerry Williams, talk show host from Boston, Massachusetts, had on-air conversations with House Speaker Tip O'Neill, who showed his arrogance in this matter. O'Neill said the raise was going through whether the people liked it or not. Jerry got mad and called talk show hosts throughout the country asking them to get their listeners to write to Tip O'Neill to express their disgust and anger.

I had Jerry on my show by telephone from Boston that very night. He repeated O'Neill's intransigent, public-b damned attitude. I urged my listeners to send Western Union public opinion messages to O'Neill immediately because the vote was to be taken in a couple of days. About an hour later, listeners called the program to report that Western Union was swamped, had called in extra operators, and that the operators generally answered the phone by saying, "We know the address and message to O'Neill, what's your billing address?"

Since I was going to continue the campaign the next night, I thought I'd better phone Western Union to check on the number of wires sent. When I got to the supervisor, he said, "Oh, you are the guy responsible. Do you know what happened here last night?"

As it turns out, Reno, Nevada, is the central point for all telegrams from the West Coast. Since the program is heard over the entire West Coast, Western Union was so swamped, they had to call in all available emergency operators. He

thanked me for the advance notice that we were going to do it again.

Just before the vote, I placed a call to Tip O'Neill, but he wouldn't talk to me (or Jerry Williams or any other talk show host). His people, however, said they were swimming in a sea of telegrams from all over the country.

The vote was taken on a sneaky parliamentary maneuver, not on a direct vote. That way, the congressmen did not have to face their constituents and say they voted for the increase.

Speaker O'Neill was interviewed the following Sunday on a network television question-and-answer program and he was asked about the flood of telegrams and mail he received. As reported by the wire services and weekly news magazines, O'Neill simply waved it off as the work of some radio talk show hosts who didn't understand the issues. Unfortunately, the network newsman let him get away with that statement.

While O'Neill had the satisfaction of winning, we, the people, had the satisfaction of knowing he had to have second thoughts about the situation and spilled some political blood in the process. A small victory was the fact that O'Neill tried to salvage the integrity of Congress by insisting on an ethics package to go along with the pay raise. He had not been so adamant before the deluge of telegrams. A second victory came about six months later when the normal congressional cost of living raise came due. Congress, knowing the storm caused by the earlier raise, decided they didn't need this additional cost of living increase and voted it down. When roused, the public can still have some input into how the country is run.

Another issue we got into was a campaign started by Alan Courtney of Miami, Florida. Alan is now, and has been, the runaway number-one talk show host in Dade County. Issues that affect older people are obviously big in this retirement community. For some time, it seemed to me that retired

persons who had paid in to Social Security all of their working lives should not be restricted to a certain amount of earned income and then be taxed 50 cents on every dollar they earn above that. When Alan called me and asked my help in getting signatures to revise this earnings limitation on Social Security recipients, I eagerly joined in. KFI allowed me the use of their presses to reproduce the petitions and we sent out thousands to interested listeners.

It is a herculean job to get people to request petitions, distribute them in retail establishments, set up tables at supermarkets, stop passengers at bus stops, and all the other means of acquiring signatures. Even large and well-financed organizations, such as taxpayer groups here in California, find it difficult to get as many as 200,000 signatures. But the publicity on my program generated 77,000 signatures.

I contacted Wilbur Mills, then head of the House Ways and Means Committee. He said, "Why don't you send them to Congressman James Burke of Massachusetts? He heads up the brand new Social Security subcommittee."

The petitions went off to Burke and then I got him on the program by phone. I knew all was lost when he said, "It's interesting to know what a *local* region of the United States is thinking." I tried to tell him it was a nationwide effort but he brushed it off, as he apparently brushed off the legislation. President Carter wavered concerning the earnings limitation, but at least we were able to bring to his attention the feelings of the American public.

The Social Security financial crisis and the earnings limitation clause have both been subjects of great concern and discussion on my programs for more than ten years. Representatives of the Social Security Administration who appeared on my program would brush off the financial crisis as not factual. They would point to the burgeoning youth population as providers of new income, but conveniently forgot the similarly burgeoning senior-citizen population which reached nearly 35 million people in 1977. These

representatives had to present the official line handed down from Washington. Unofficially, and off the air, many agreed the problem was serious and growing.

Now that the funds have been depleted, Washington is forced to pay some attention. It is the old story of attempting to close the barn door after the animals have fled. Talk show hosts across the country have been aware for many years that the Social Security crisis is of major concern to young and old alike. The young people are concerned about the ever-increasing amount coming out of their paychecks, and wondering if there will be any funds paid out to them when they are eligible. The older folks are naturally worried about their immediate Social Security checks and whether the funds will last even in the short run.

Some legislators calm down their constituency by simply introducing remedial bills that get the voters off their backs. They know, however, that those bills will not even be heard in committee. If talk show hosts across the country had gotten together years ago to push for action, President Carter and congress would not have been faced with the impossible and thankless task of saving Social Security by ever-increasing taxes.

Now let's discuss some political victories. I'm sure other talk shows can cite various battles won, but I can only detail those with which I have been intimately involved.

Governor Jerry Brown (1976 presidential candidate) is one of the most unusual, refreshing, and frustrating politicians to ever appear on the American scene. His friends and his enemies agree on only one thing: You cannot predict what Jerry will do. This was especially true at the beginning of his term in 1974. He has learned in office how to deal with more than one issue at a time, but when he first took office he publicly stated that his method was to choose a subject, deal with it in depth, make a decision, and move on to the next issue. Pundits said it was a good thing our bachelor governor was not thinking of getting married or no state business

would get done. The problem then was how to get the governor's attention. The issue at hand was rescinding the NOx law.

Smog is a major problem in California, particularly in Southern California. For some time there had been a law on the books that said if you sold a 1965-70 automobile, it had to be equipped with a NOx device to aid in reducing air pollution. The California legislature passed a new law that said the six counties of Southern California couldn't wait and everyone who owned those '65 to '70 automobiles had to equip them immediately on a fixed schedule. This was a massive program for a society with an average of two to four autos in every family. Manufacturers were urged to gear up for a massive outpouring of NOx devices which ranged in price from \$25 to \$100, plus installation.

The public began to doubt the effectiveness of the NOx filter. Many people with older cars found it reduced gasoline mileage at a time when gas conservation was called for. Mechanics were confirming that it actually damaged engines in some cases. Proponents claimed that, if installed properly, the filters would remove many tons of nitrous oxides from the air.

Legislation was introduced to rescind the six county requirement. The more often automotive and air pollution experts appeared on the program, the more apparent it became that the NOx device was not giving the relief it was designed for. It was the topic of discussion for many nights and people were urged to write their legislators to express their feelings. The rescind bill finally passed both houses and was sent to the governor for his signature.

Many of the legislators in Sacramento believed that the governor was so pro-environmental protection, he would not sign the bill, and they were highly doubtful they could override his veto. Once a bill is sent to the governor, he has 12 days to sign or veto it, so immediate action was necessary. It required a frontal attack.

I took to the air, recounted all the factual evidence we had, and urged people to write to the governor with their opinion. Somehow it didn't seem to be enough, so the next day I talked with a sympathetic member of the legislature in Sacramento. "Well," he said slowly, "you could give out the governor's private phone number which I happen to have."

Now that seemed like dirty pool. I thought about it all afternoon. Well, what the heck, since there seemed to be no other way, I announced the number on the air. According to the statistics released by the governor's office, 5000 people phoned and 14,000 wrote letters. The *Los Angeles Times* printed the story, but as usual referred only to "a local radio talk show host."

This certainly got the attention of the governor. As was his way in those days, he called in all the experts. He had interminable meetings. Over one weekend at his home in Los Angeles there was a steady stream of knowledgeable people, including L.A. County Supervisor Kenneth Hahn, who had been leading the fight with me at the local level.

A few days later at a hearing on the subject, the governor suddenly turned to Supervisor Hahn and said, "Let me have your pen, I'll sign the bill." Hahn got the signature, then ran to the telephone to breathlessly tell my audience the victory had been won. The governor later said he had determined that the NOx device worked when an automobile is in perfect tune. Not many autos can make that claim. As a result, he believed that, even after all the cars had been fitted, it would reduce nitrous oxides a minimal 2%. With the possibilities of engine damage (and law suits), plus the loss of at least 10% in gasoline mileage, it seemed the loss far outweighed the gain.

Despite everything, the governor did not support subsequent bills to do away with the NOx device entirely. The original law still exists in California that if you sell your '65 to '70 automobile, it must be equipped with a NOx device. A battle to be won on another day.

When Jerry Brown swept into office, he not only replaced Ronald Reagan, he also knocked out many legislators associated with the old administration. It suddenly came to light that these legislators would benefit from a law about to take effect that would provide windfall retirement bonuses of up to a quarter million dollars per person in some cases. My talk show, spurred on by irate citizens, jumped into the fray. The legislative session was over and there seemed to be no way to remedy the situation. We kept a steady stream of letters and phone calls moving to both Sacramento and district offices. Serving out the last month of his term, Reagan threatened to call a special session of the legislature if something wasn't done. Legislative leaders countered by suggesting they would cut Reagan's pension if he dared. We intensified the public howling with more and more letters, telegrams, and phone calls.

A one-term legislator said he would introduce a bill to cut out the huge bonus if Reagan would call the special session. Reagan did just that as one of his last official acts as governor. The legislators were livid, but what could they do in the face of public outrage? They rescinded the windfall bonus, and sharply reduced Reagan's pension in addition. The legislator who authored the bill publicly acknowledged that it was the pressure by my program and other talk shows that later joined in that saved the taxpayers many hundreds of thousands of dollars immediately and uncounted millions in the future.

It is interesting to note how loud public officials cry about how much more money they could be making in private industry. When it comes time to remove themselves, or be removed from office, the cry is heard that they are having a tough time and need all the help they can get from the taxpayers. Many who threatened to go into private industry found they weren't wanted, and wound up with appointive jobs in government by other office holders who realized that

they too might be in the same unemployment boat one day.

Fluoridation is always a hot topic for a talk program. The emotional reaction to what should be a purely scientific discussion is wondrous. Most major cities across the country have fluorides in their water supply on the theory that it prevents cavities in young children. Opponents point out that fluoride is a poison, is naturally found to some degree in water, and is available in many toothpastes. Surprisingly, in Los Angeles, where almost everything seems to happen first, no matter how far out, the water system remains unfluoridated.

In 1975 the issue came up once again before the L.A. City Council. The American Dental Association pushed fluoridation; various local activist groups were against it. After some stormy hearings, the bill was rushed through the council and was signed into law by the acting mayor within two hours of passage. The entire procedure seemed untoward. If the council had to sneak the measure through, then run for cover, maybe it was not in the best interests of the public. I have no expertise regarding medicine, but I did wonder about a political system that can invade our drinking water and medicate it at will. If fluoride can be added, how about mood-altering drugs in time of violence? With these precedents, what could happen in future years with a less benevolent government? The argument that poor people cannot afford or do not bother with fluoride toothpaste seems not sufficiently valid to force a medication on an entire population, especially when it only benefits youngsters below 15 years of age. A program of fluoriding teeth in the schools would be much less costly. Ninety-eight percent of the fluoridated water is flushed down the toilet or goes down the drain, is used industrially, or is used to water crops. It seemed like a costly waste, so I opposed fluoridating the water simply on philosophical grounds.

In expressing my opinion on the air, it seemed to touch a

raw nerve in many people who before had not bothered to consider fluoridation one way or another. The letters began to pour in to the various councilmen. The barrage of phone calls to their offices continued daily. Since this was a matter that affected all the people, it seemed only reasonable to put it to a vote of the people.

The councilmen were in a tough position. If they put it on the ballot and were turned down after they had already created the law, it would make them look like fools. Finally they decided to put it on the ballot, but only as an advisory measure having no onus of enforcement. The vote was overwhelmingly against fluoridating the water. There was an air of uncertainty as to what the council would do next. No public pronouncements were forthcoming. A few weeks later, the council, with no discussion, voted to rescind the earlier fluoridation ordinance. You *can* fight City Hall and win!

One of the most instructive and interesting political battles I've been involved in was on something called "None of the Above." The idea, as expressed by one of my guests, Sy Leon, head of the League of Non-Voters, seemed quite simple. Put an additional line on the ballot under every office indicating the voter did not like any of the candidates chosen for him by the political parties. In many elections, the so-called victors may actually have been repudiated by the voters and we never know it. Even if we discount those who never register to vote, we still find a majority of elections where less than half of those registered actually vote. There have been recent elections where as small a turnout as 12% of the registered voters provided landslide margins of 70% to the winner and 30% to the loser. Truthfully, we will never know how the voters felt. Maybe they disliked both candidates but had no way of showing it other than refusing to go to the polls. Thus, "None of the Above" after each office would give us the unknown factor.

We discussed the pro's and con's of it on the program for a few months. One of my regular listeners was then State Assemblyman Bill Campbell. He phoned me and said he liked the idea so much, he would introduce a bill to put "None of the Above" on every ballot in California. This surprised me as I felt most politicians would run from something that would allow the public to show disapproval. My feeling was that an initiative campaign would be the only way. Yet, it certainly was a lot simpler and less costly if we could get it through the legislature.

This novel idea needed as much publicity as it could get. I decided on a letter-writing campaign and enlisted the help of Jim Eason, talk show host at KGO in San Francisco. The letters were only to be expressions of approval or disapproval and sent to us, not to the legislators.

We received more than 10,000 letters of approval and less than 100 of disapproval. Assemblyman Campbell then called a news conference in Sacramento that both Jim Eason and I attended. While the TV cameras were grinding away, and the wire services and newspapers took still photos, we dumped the 10,000 letters out of huge mail sacks to make the point that there really was interest.

Soon after, I flew back to Sacramento to testify at a hearing of the Assembly Elections and Reapportionment Committee. It was a fascinating experience that was dutifully reported to my listeners in detail as an object lesson on how bills get through or are killed in committee.

All was going quite well until Sy Leon stepped forward to testify on behalf of the bill. One of the legislators picked up on the name of the organization he represented, League of *Non-Voters*. It turned into a real donneybrook. The legislators were furious that here was a man who was not voting. Leon tried to explain that without "None of the Above" on the ballot, there was no way for him to express his displeasure. The legislators, as you have seen them do in televised

hearings, simply wouldn't let Leon's position be understood.

I could see the bill never coming out of committee with this sidetracking. Finally in desperation I bellowed, "Gentlemen, don't tar and feather me or this bill because of one man's attitude. I have voted in every election since I have been old enough to vote, and I support "None of the Above." That seemed to cut through the heavy atmosphere and we got back to discussing the real issue. Surprisingly, the bill passed the committee on a six to two vote. One member of the committee voted "None of the Above."

The wire services crowded around Assemblyman Campbell and Sy Leon after the hearing. They were more interested in the confrontation about non-voting than they were about the major points made in the hearing concerning "None of the Above." As usual, the print media did not even mention the witnesses such as myself who were associated with radio, nor did they report our testimony. Television had covered the earlier press conference and couldn't cut the radio personalities from their video, so they let it run, but relegated the story to the end of the show where the host twinkles his eyes and snickers a bit.

I just couldn't believe that this measure, which seemed to be against the best interests of incumbent legislators, had somehow survived its first committee hearing. Apparently, neither did the leadership in Sacramento. Now they were aroused. They took the unnecessary measure of diverting the bill to the Assembly Revenue and Taxation Committee. Despite the fact that the State Department of Finance and the legislative analyst both provided documents showing there would be no cost involved, the committee decided that the additional line "None of the Above" on the ballot would cost \$3,000,000. In California the law says the state cannot mandate actions for local government without providing the funds. Even though this is frequently ignored, we knew that, with the heat on from the top, the legislators would neither

ignore the requirement nor appropriate \$3,000,000. In effect, "None of the Above" was dead for that legislative session.

Neighboring Nevada, however, picked up the idea and ran with it. It was proposed, voted on by the Nevada legislature, and signed into law in time for the Ford-Carter election. In the Republican primary there was one result that was nothing less than spectacular. Two men, Anthony and Earhart, were running for a congressional seat. "None of the Above" won the seat with a vote of over 47%. Earhart got 28.9% and the other candidate, Anthony, 23.8%. This had no direct effect on the election since "None of the Above" was simply advisory, but it did put Earhart on notice that his constituency wanted something different than he was offering. Earhart said he was going to canvass the voters to see what they did want. Without "None of the Above," the winner would probably have claimed a 5% margin of victory over his opponent and proceeded with the same political direction.

In the November general election, "None of the Above" came in third, behind Carter and Ford, but ahead of Lester Maddox and Roger MacBride (Libertarian). "None of the Above" came in third in the U.S. Senate race behind winner Howard Cannon (D) and David Towell (R), but ahead of two other candidates. In the vote for Nevada Supreme Court Justice, Al Gunderson ran unopposed winning on a three to one margin over "None of the Above," which at least showed opposition. It is important to remember that the candidates spent a great deal of money publicizing their candidacies. "None of the Above" didn't spend a penny and had no publicity campaign. It received a respectable number of votes, and even won by a handy margin in the primary.

To the best of my knowledge Nevada is the only state to put "None of the Above" to the test. The results eloquently show that, given the opportunity, the people want choices they do not have now. Radio talk shows may one day get

together to engender enough interest to really give the movement a forward push. But for the time being, there is no realistic way of trying to get "None of the Above" through the California legislature. There is no well-financed organization willing to support an initiative campaign in California or elsewhere to get it on the ballot. When President Carter, or any other politician, claims a mandate of the people, he is not including "None of the Above" in his calculations. The trend is away from the voting booth, "None of the Above" might make the difference in voter indifference.

Twenty-three states have the initiative process that allows the people to override the legislature. In those states radio talk shows can be very helpful in publicizing the activities of the signature gatherers. The sad truth is that many people like to gripe on the talk shows, but very few are actually willing to give of their time. We are a lazy people politically and it is a fact that people are more willing to part with dollars than to give up an afternoon collecting signatures. Unless it is a major effort, such as that mounted by Cesar Chavez for his UFW or one where people are paid to gather signatures such as the attempts to legalize dog racing, most initiative measures fail to make the ballot for lack of valid signatures.

In the summer and fall of 1976, the price of housing in Southern California rose as much as 50% to 100%. The property tax assessor found it difficult to keep up; yet in some cases, taxes rose more than 150%. People were outraged. The legislators went through the motions of reopening the budget and making a few slashes here and there, but the property tax stood at its incredibly high level, forcing those on fixed incomes to reduce their standard of living or move out of a home may be already fully paid for.

A number of property tax reduction initiatives were designed, put through the proper state qualifying proce-

dures, and workers were sent out to get signatures. Each proposal had something a little different, but they were basically the same in intent, so they were effectively working against each other. They were competing for the same signature collectors and the public was confused as to which initiative they had signed. The Los Angeles County Tax Assessor himself had a separate petition because even he thought the taxes were too high.

When certain of these groups began attacking each other's petitions saying only theirs would do the job, I felt this nonsense had to stop or they would all fail. Editorializing on the air, I suggested that I could not support any of the petitions until "all these egomaniacs get together in one effort!" I received calls from the head of each group screaming, "You certainly couldn't mean me." After assuring each that I really meant someone else, I invited them on the program with the other members so they would get together. What could they do? If they refused to come, it would prove my point.

So they appeared! It was a heated debate for almost two hours until they came to an agreement, which was to be formalized in writing privately. At that meeting the details were worked out. Two of the participants immediately left for vacation. In printing the new initiative petition sheets it was determined that only one name could be used. A decision was made without the vacationers. On return, at least one group whose name had been dropped balked and refused to go ahead.

A year later, after every initiative petition went down to defeat for lack of signatures, the major groups finally agreed once again to come together in one petition and circulate it cooperatively. This time they collected twice the number of signatures necessary and qualified for the June 1978 ballot. It was the first time in the history of California that an initiative petition qualified in every county in the state.

Within three days after the announcement that so many signatures were collected, the politicians in Sacramento began moving on their own property tax legislation. They had been promising relief but doing nothing for years. The governor even called a special session of the legislature to facilitate tax relief action.

Radio talk show hosts don't always make friends through these methods, but I do feel it is important to use whatever media clout one has to try to move things along. A news reporter covering an event should stick to the facts. A radio talk show host is in effect a commentator who has the ability to involve the principals.

Los Angeles is noted for its lack of a swift and effective public transit system. Either one drives or is forced to take a bus to cover this sprawling city. It is difficult enough when the buses run, but in 1974 they stopped for 68 days due to a bus drivers' strike. How to get to work, to the doctor, or even to the market for food became survival situations for some who could not find alternate means of transportation.

The situation became so difficult that many callers wanted to know why the National Guard could not be called out to run the transportation system temporarily. We got Governor Reagan on the phone and he said he would call out the Guard if Mayor Tom Bradley would declare the city in an emergency situation. Then Mayor Bradley proclaimed on my program that, while we may have an emergency for some people, the solution really wasn't all that simple. His advisors had told him that if the National Guard were called out, there would be blood on the streets.

These public statements shocked a number of the participants on both sides of the strike issue. Whatever may have been going on behind closed doors, there now seemed to be an additional urgency to the problem. We aired every point of view—from the officials of the bus drivers' union to the officials of the bus company. Especially important were the

many bus drivers who called the show to say it was the only way they had to be heard in the matter since they had authorized the strike long before they actually went out on strike. Many weeks had passed without further vote or consultation by the strike leaders.

The management of the Southern California Rapid Transit District (bus company) sent us a note which read in part, "The issues which have surfaced on the Hilly Rose Show have helped to bring about the most significant progress so far in the current strike."

Certainly a radio talk show cannot claim it has settled a major strike. What it can do is publicly ask the questions officials do not want to answer directly for the record.

In a subsequent bus strike in 1976, the two sides were almost in complete agreement, but got hung up on a small salary difference. Remembering the earlier lengthy and destructive strike, no one believed there would be another showdown, but there was. This one lasted 36 days and was so frustrating the president of the bus company, Byron Cook, called a press conference to explain why he couldn't accede to the strikers as a matter of principle. The regular press carried the story, but Cook felt they had not reported it accurately or completely enough. He phoned my program in frustration to get his side of the issue directly to the strikers as well as to the general audience. I invited him to come to the studio the next night and answer questions directly from the audience which included many striking bus drivers. Again it would be wrong to claim final results from this frontal and public presentation of the issues, but movement did occur toward a final solution soon after Mr. Cook's appearance.

It has become quite fashionable for legislators to send so-called newsletters to their constituents. Actually they are nothing more than promotion sheets to build up the legislator himself. My assemblyman in Sacramento is Herschel

Rosenthal. His Hollywood district not only includes me, but probably the largest concentration of out-of-the-closet homosexuals in the country. A consenting adults bill was passed in the legislature which spelled out that what people do in the privacy of their bedroom was no business of society. I happen to agree with the bill, but I was appalled to read in Rosenthal's newsletter that he had helped pass this bill despite the objections of weirdos and narrow-minded people (I don't remember the exact words, but they were quite insulting). Any legislator can object to what some of his constituents think, but I felt it was wrong to label them as weirdos and narrow-minded. I decided that I might be more effective as one of his constituents rather than as a radio personality. I sent him a note on my personal stationery telling him I thought *he* was a weirdo and quite narrow in his thinking to say these voters did not have the right to their opinions. There was no direct response, but I was taken off the mailing list for the newsletter and never heard from my elected representative again.

I am more convinced than ever that only organized efforts work in this society, and radio talk shows can organize individuals into effective groups. A good example of this is the California mandatory sentencing law for those committing crimes with a gun. Last year a bank robber in Los Angeles had been visiting a number of branches, handing the teller a note that said he had a gun, and walking out with a handful of money.

One teller, however, looked directly at the robber and said, "Let me see your gun." The robber was shocked and replied, "Are you kidding? I could get 15 years if I had a gun!" The man walked out empty handed and when the story hit the news, he was apprehended on the next job he tried. Everyone, including the governor, the attorney general, certain legislators, and police departments, joined together to spread the word through television commercials and print media: "Use a gun, go to jail."

But it was not always this way. Just a few years earlier, soft judges continually gave the defendants the benefit of the doubt and, in many cases, sentenced them to probation rather than jail. frequently people on probation were picked up committing another crime with a gun and, even then, got additional probation. The citizens were upset, the police were upset, the prosecutors were upset, but little could be done without mandatory sentencing legislation.

The Assembly Criminal Justice Committee was long known as the graveyard for remedial legislation such as this. Bills that would sail through the State Senate with no opposition would die in the assembly committee and not even make it to the floor. No one was more vocal in the defense of the rights of the criminal than the chairman of that committee. We knew that of the six committee members, two were for the bill, three uncommitted, and the chairman absolutely against.

We booked every type of expert available on the subject for the show: judges who didn't want their discretion taken away; probation officers who were disgusted to see their charges committing crimes again; sociologists; criminologists; minority group leaders and legislators directly involved. The whole point was to get the people involved by expressing themselves one way or the other to the committee members through mail and phone calls.

When the final vote was taken, five assemblymen voted for the mandatory sentencing. The committee chairman was the only vote against it. When asked about the tremendous flood of mail received by the committee that was almost all in favor of the bill, the chairman said, "Oh, that was just the work of a couple of slick operators in Southern California." My audience and I will easily suffer those slings and arrows if crime is reduced and lives are saved. Recent statistics do show a downward trend.

It would be nice if I could tell you radio talk shows rule the world through mail response by listeners, but it just is

not true. Though I was not a part of the campaign asking the governor to veto the consenting adults bill mentioned earlier, his office announced he had received mail 100 to one asking for a veto. He signed the bill anyway. California voters turned down legalization of marijuana by a two to one margin. The following year pro-marijuana initiative petitioners couldn't get enough signatures to qualify for the ballot. Yet the legislature decriminalized marijuana and the governor signed it. On the death penalty issue the voters were overwhelmingly for it by a margin of three to one. The Supreme Court overturned the penalty because it didn't allow for mitigating circumstances. A new death penalty bill was prepared and was passed by both houses, yet the governor vetoed it due to personal convictions. His veto was overridden only by extreme constituent mail pressure.

Radio talk shows are a catalyst for political and social action if handled properly. Mort Sahl worked as a talk show host in Los Angeles for over a year, but his was a one-topic program. He was convinced that the assassination of President Kennedy and those of Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King, Jr. were all part of a conspiracy. Most talk shows have dealt with this topic at some length, but to Sahl, it was an all-consuming passion. This seems to be overkill and damages credibility. Not every talk show has to do investigative work. Some are just fun. If one does commit to investigation and analysis, it should cover a variety of issues. Because radio and television personalities do have an influence on the public, it is important they be an Everyman, fighting everyman's battles, not pushing their personal convictions.

The need for carefully selecting issues was brought home sharply in a recent San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors meeting. At issue was whether a deputy sheriff should have the right to wear a mustache. County Supervisor James

L. Mayfield, in supporting the mustache, said in view of other controversies in which he has engaged, he was a little hesitant about bringing up the subject. Then he was quoted by the *San Bernardino Sun-Telegram* as saying, "I don't want to get a reputation like Baxter Ward (controversial L.A. County Supervisor) or Hilly Rose, but I like to raise a little dust when I think something is ridiculous."

Many legislators call me to help get mail and phone response from the public. Too many campaigns dilute effectiveness. Too few take away the clout necessary to get the job done. Integrity must be maintained. I try to choose the really important issues that effect the majority of people. Don Quixote became famous because of his impossible dream. In the real world of politics it now seems wiser for me to engage only in those battles that have an honest chance of succeeding. I don't need the reputation Supervisor Mayfield referred to. Wise politicians reserve their strength for important pieces of legislation and it is probably good advice for talk show hosts as well.

With this new-found direction, I decided not to join those urging the passage of a bill to make tapioca the state dessert. A really messy banana split maybe, but tapioca just seems too bland for my program.

10

But That's Not What I Called About

Here we are at the end of this book and I feel very much like the caller to a phone-in show who knows he only has three minutes to talk. He spends two and a half minutes speaking on one subject. Just as the host is about to end the conversation the caller says, "But that's not what I called about!" With that ploy he hopes to get a little more time to present his position.

When this project began I wasn't sure there would be enough to fill a book. Now that I have interviewed so many communicasters who have spent most of their adult lives in the business, I realize we are all loaded with fascinating stories that could individually fill a book. As a group we have had high-paying and very satisfying jobs. We meet and interrelate with the most fascinating people on earth (or they would not be on our programs). The callers and listeners build our self-importance until we believe we are demigods, which helps counter the attitude of some station managements who feel that, like all talent, we are nothing more than meat to be sold in the marketplace.

To the worker at the punch press creating 10,000 widgets

per hour, all the same, day in and day out, it seems as though talk show hosts really have it made. Undeniably, not one of us would trade microphones for the punch press; yet we pay a heavy price for the glories and fun of our business. The attrition rate of talk show hosts is high. We operate under terrible pressure since, like TV programs, we are only as good as our last rating. We must stay on top of all the news and read in depth the background on all major issues, worldwide as well as local. Easily 90% of what we are prepared to discuss in great detail never surfaces unless we squeeze it in. Yet, if we missed a story somewhere, we are accused of not doing our homework.

When a major event occurs such as each of the assassinations of the sixties, callers will stay on that one subject throughout the broadcast day. Paul Benzaquin in Boston reports that during the Arab-Israeli Six Day War so much latent anti-Semitism surfaced that some professors at Tufts University thought it would be a good opportunity to learn about the sociological implications of bigotry. They requested tapes of the various conversations between callers and hosts. The head of the Sociology Department and a number of doctoral candidates spent hours, days, and weeks analyzing those tapes. Only one important conclusion was reached, and that by unanimous consensus: "No one could sit through these tapes without damage to his reason." Yet we sit through it daily, year after year.

The man at the punch press or in the automotive assembly line may suspect damage to his reason from the repetitiveness of his chore, but we know for a fact that some talk show hosts have indeed committed suicide, have had nervous breakdowns, and have spent time in mental institutions. Others continue to broadcast with only a portion of their audience suspecting they have gone bonkers. Of course, some have gone on to become legislators. One must hope they switched in time.

Television newsman and author Edwin Newman points out that not only do we talk very little to each other in modern day society but, when we do, we are less capable of communicating with each other because of the deterioration of everyday language. Here is perhaps one of the greatest strengths of telephone-talk radio. Though we are not in the business of correcting and upgrading the language, we do promote the art of communication between people. A society that cannot communicate cannot survive. The biblical story of the Tower of Babel suggests the dire consequences.

For many it is not the lack of ability to communicate but the lack of someone to communicate with. The number of lonely people in this society is staggering. Psychologist Dr. James J. Lynch of the University of Maryland School of Medicine says the medical consequences of loneliness are devastating. He claims that social isolation and chronic loneliness are significant contributors to illness and premature death. But apart from these conclusions, it is clear that a large proportion of radio talk show listeners are filling a void in their lives. Talk shows represent to them that "open window to the world."

When all is said and done, telephone-talk shows are uniquely American, stemming from our heritage of a free people. Can you imagine shows like this in Russia? A few foreign countries have their versions of these programs, but no country has the number and diversity that we do. No other country, with the possible exception of Canada, allows the absolute openness that we do. Where else can an average citizen so openly talk to and even criticize the governor, a senator, or even the president of the United States?

Currently more than 30% of American homes are wired directly to cable television. The percentage is growing faster than almost anyone imagined. Satellite transmission of television and radio is making coast-to-coast network pro-

gramming possible from a single station at an economical cost. Transmission of the daily newspaper through your television set will be commonplace in the near future. We will become a nation totally wired together, not only for instant dissemination of information but for instant reaction on the part of the public. One day we may even vote by pressing a button on our television set or radio. What fantastic ramifications this creates for the society.

Whatever the future brings, it will always be important to discuss the issues on telephone-talk shows. The instant and capsulized news of today, which bombards us from every corner of the world, has made people insensitive to the great issues of the world and more self-concerned. But the pendulum swings both ways, and when the problems of the world pierce our disinterest and hedonistic isolation, we may well find our way back to concern for our fellow man.

As has happened during major events such as the death of an important public figure, telephone-talk shows function as a mass public wake; there is consolation in sharing grief with one's neighbors. The future for telephone-talk shows is in helping our society survive the perils of day-to-day living: to explain, to coalesce, to communicate.

Communicasters don't sing and dance, but we sometimes tell jokes and get off good one-liners. It is, after all, show business, and we recognize our responsibility to entertain as well as to inform. The callers, the listeners, and the entire society are changing. Telephone-talk shows will change right along with them. Jolson was right, "You ain't heard nuthin' yet."

And That *Is* What I Called About!

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